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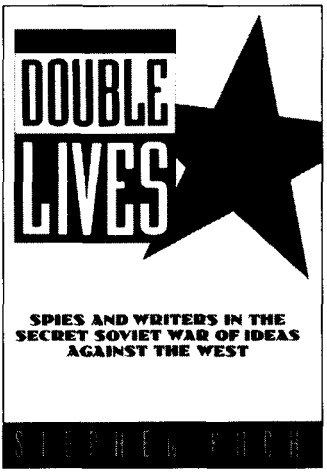

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COMMENT

The Ideological Blacklist It would seem that Sidney Hook, the eminent political philosopher and activist, has been the victim of an ideological blacklist. I have not seen every book in recent years dealing with some aspects of Marxism. But none of those I've looked at contain a single reference to Hook – not even a negative one. He is not in any index; he has just disappeared, been killed off. Yet the fact is that he wrote the first definitive work on Marx in this country.

Sidney Hook had his share of failings, and I had my disagreements with him. He occasionally descended to unfair arguments, sometimes personal ones, against those who should have been closest to him. And he indulged too often in polemics that could have been left to lesser figures. But for Hook to be ignored, or boycotted, is a gross cultural injustice, a flagrant disservice to the history of ideas.

In the thirties and forties, Hook was one of the major interpreters of Marx and Hegel; and he had an enormous influence on an entire generation of writers and intellectuals, not only in clarifying Marxist theory but in indicating where its fallacies and shortcomings lay. And he did this with great wit and concision. I remember, for example, his demolition of a popular Stalinist notion about the change of quantity into quality as a basic element of dialectical materialism. Hook said simply that four does not change into red, and a number does not change into a color. He was also a gifted teacher – as I learned from having been in some of his courses at New York University as a graduate student and part-time instructor. So far as I know, he was bested only once by a student. He was talking about the philosophic idea of becoming and of innate qualities, and he said only an acorn could become an oak tree, when Delmore Schwartz, in his class at the time, raised his hand and sputtered that only a pig could become a ham sandwich.

In addition, Hook was an accomplished philosopher, though he did not make any original contributions that I know of. He was a disciple of John Dewey and a leading expounder of his ideas. He was an associate of Bertrand Russell. But his name is absent from all the books of philosophy I have come across.

However, besides being unjust, there is something puzzling about this boycott. After all, all those writing about Marx or about philosophic subjects could not have been members of a monolithic party with orders to ignore Hook. How could so many diverse people have dismissed him? Could it be that the old Stalinist branding of Hook as a pariah has spread almost unconsciously through the entire field of Marxist writings and general philosophic studies? Could the fact that he was an influential anti-

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communist have led to his excommunication? Could there be a Stalinist unconscious in the cultural underground? Or could there have been such a profound change in postmodern philosophy as to rule out the writings of Hook? These are very disturbing and far-reaching hypotheses. But what other explanation could there be?

The Life and Death of Poetry Since Edmund Wilson asked some years ago whether poetry is a dying technique, its health has been periodically asserted and questioned. Now Dana Gioia, a young poet and critic, has raised questions about the audience for poetry in a slim but formidable collection of essays and reviews, *Can Poetry Matter? Essays on Poetry and American Culture*. It is formidable because it brings up the hard questions, challenging accepted ideas and values about poets, poetry, literature, and the culture. Gioia's outlook is mostly gloomy, but he does praise a number of poets while deploring the direction of much contemporary poetry.

Gioia's main complaint is that poetry has a tiny reading public, and that the reason for its marginality is its ingrown character, its narrow lyricism, and its academically-bounded habitat. There is much to be said for this indictment. But I am not so sure of Gioia's location of causes for the poetic malady, nor am I convinced his prescription for the cure will work. Gioia's diagnosis of the illness is that the kind of poetry that might engage a larger public – narrative poetry, longer poems, poetry with larger public themes – has largely disappeared. He cites Robinson Jeffers and Edwin Arlington Robinson wistfully as the last successful examples of this endangered genre. He also blames the migration of poets into the academy for the isolation of poetry, because of a shrinking of experience. In addition, he laments the deadening effect of the new theorizing that fills teachers' minds with abstractions far from the literary process.

Surely, some, if not all, of these observations are valid. Still, there are a few unanswered questions – the basic one being why all this has happened. Admittedly, life as a teacher limits a poet's range of experience. But why can't a poet who teaches think about the larger issues of the time? There must be a more fundamental reason for the narrowing of vision to personal and lyrical subjects. The answer must lie in our collective experience and in the culture as a whole. As compared to the situation in America, the audience for poetry was far greater in the communist countries, where poets like other writers and intellectuals were cast into opposition to the government. This automatically created a more extensive theme for the dissidents. And the reading public was not bombarded as it is in this country by mesmerizing kitsch and popular culture. Hence the solution to the problem – if it is a problem – lies not, as Gioia sug-

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gests, in a new poetic form but in the specific gravity of the culture.

Moreover, Gioia blunts the fact that it is difficult for "the common reader," as he refers to that audience, to read serious poetry, because of its linguistic concentration and metaphorical allusiveness. Actually, there is no common reader; there are only trained and untrained, professional and general readers. Most of the literate audience, that is, general readers, if they read at all, read easy fiction and digestible social and political books. Such outstanding poets as Joseph Brodsky, Czeslaw Milosz, and Derek Walcott have written about broader subjects. Yet they scarcely have broken the barrier between the modern poet and the reading public. Academics, unfortunately, read mostly jargonized literary theory.

Another of Gioia's panaceas is that poetry readings be combined with popular music and other forms of entertainment. This strikes me as a gimmick that in effect succumbs to the trendy aspects of the culture. Gioia just touches upon the fact that apparently poets don't read. For there are thousands of poets in America who could certainly swell the sales if not the reading of contemporary poetry and of literary magazines.

The pieces in Gioia's book that are not about the predicament of poetry, while acknowledging many of the accepted figures, are mainly given to a reordering of the poetic canon. His praise of Weldon Kees, for example, made me think I had underestimated Kees's work, though I still do not think he is a major poet. Some of his other resurrection of hitherto lesser figures are challenging, others seem to go too far. His reclamation of Jeffers and Robinson appears to reflect Gioia's taste for longer works, narrative poems, and those with public themes. But it need hardly be said that length, theme, subject, and form do not of themselves make for quality. Still, despite any differences we might have with Gioia's judgments or readings of specific poets, we can only commend his critical boldness and his talent for confronting buried questions.

Intellectuals: A Footnote There's a curious shift of direction in Wolf Lepenies's interesting speculations in the form of declarations on the history and role of intellectuals in this issue of *Partisan Review*. After citing the tragic blunders of intellectuals in the past, particularly in the utopian and revolutionary currents stemming from the Enlightenment, Lepenies ends by extolling the traditions of the Enlightenment and, by implication, the left, as a political guide to the future.

W. P.

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DORIS LESSING

The Thoughts of a Near-Human

Some years ago I read a book of memoirs or travel about which I remember nothing except that somewhere in the then-Soviet Caucasus there lived a creature more like a man than an ape, a "Yeti" who came down from its home in the mountains to observe the lives of the villagers. It sometimes helped them with their work on the fields, might spend a night in a hut, and ate their food. They regarded him as a friend. This was the Second World War. Soldiers came and in spite of the villagers' protests killed the creature. Meanwhile rumors of the Yeti had reached civilization. Scientists came to the village, but no one could remember where the soldiers had buried the corpse. The scientists went away again.

Boom, boom, boom. These conversational tones of the elusive Alma, a species of retarded Neanderthal man, will reverberate around the world if a Franco-Russian expedition succeeds in its mission this summer to capture a cousin of the Yeti, Abominable Snowman and Bigfoot in the remote Caucasus mountains of Kazahkstan.

Leading the hunt is Marie-Jeanne Koffmann, a 73-year-old doctor who has collected 500 eyewitness accounts of the mythical creature during her 20 years of traversing the sparsely populated wastes of Kabardin-Balkar by horse and jeep. Always one step behind her quarry, she has taken impressions of their huge footprints and studied their voluminous droppings. Her quest has been given fresh impetus by the claim of her colleague Gregori Patchenkoof that he observed an Alma in the same region for six minutes last August. "Its appearance corresponded exactly to that of the other witnesses," Sylvain Pallix, organiser of the Alma 92 Expedition, said last week. "It was a big primate, a biped that walked perfectly on two feet. It was 5 ft 8 inches - 6 ft 6 inches, covered with reddish hair about 6 inches long. Its face was a mixture of an ape's and a Neanderthal man's. . . . Patchenkoof found it in a sheepfold where horses were kept. Almas are attracted to horses because they love to make little braids in their manes. . . ." According to Dr Koffmann Almas are in the habit of raiding shepherds' huts for food scraps and clothes, which they sometimes wear although well insulated with fur. . . .

Its newborn young, according to one witness's testimony were exactly like human babies, except that they were smaller. They had pink skin, like human infants, exactly the same head, the same arms

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and legs. Not hairy . . . It lives at heights of 8,000 - 12,000 feet, sometimes seeking refuge at much higher levels.

The £1 m expedition will therefore be carrying a technological panoply which includes infra-red cameras, miniature helicopter "drones" containing cameras, motorised hang-gliders, four-wheel vehicles and motorbikes. Their most important piece of equipment is a gun which fires hypodermic darts. "Our aim is to capture an Alma with the help of the local population. We want to take a mould of its face, and specimens of its hair, skin and blood and then set it free with a radio tracer band. There is to be no King Kong spectacle of bringing it back."

– Excerpted from an article in *The Sunday Times,* London, March 29, 1992 by Stuart Wavell, "Expedition Goes Hunting Russia's Elusive Ape-man." (Reprinted with permission)

The first time I went down past the snowline further than I had done before and saw the place of The Others, there was smoke coming through the grass on a hut and I thought the hut was on fire. I was afraid. When the earth is dry after the hot months sometimes everything burns, trees too, and we have little food. I hid behind the rock on the hill behind the huts and watched, but although the smoke did not stop coming through the hot roof, the grass did not burn. Later I watched how They heaped sticks together in a place between the huts and brought out in a hollow stick the red stuff that makes fire and put it into the sticks and the fire burned but did not run everywhere and burn the huts, or the grass, or the trees. They all went off together to the river and Their place had no one in it. I crept down and into the smoking hut and I put some of the red fire-stuff into a big stick the way They did. I burned my fingers. Then I ran up fast to where we have our cave and said to my brothers, Look, I have brought the fire They have tamed so that it does not burn Them. I told you about it – do you remember? They did not remember, and when I put the red stuff like light stones, which is what burns in the dead trees after a fire has gone past, into a heap of sticks, it went dark and then cold. What I thought then was, Why didn't we think of using fire, the way They do? But my brothers did not believe me when I said They make a place inside a shelter and there Fire lives like a bird and it is no danger to them. That was when they first said I am not one of them now, and they hit me when I said, But what I say is true and we could learn to do it.

One other time I tried to steal the Fire away and again the hot red was cold and black when I had climbed back up to where I and my

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brothers live. I thought a long time then, and often afterwards of how They make a heap of sticks, and put the fire into the sticks, and then small bits of wood onto the flames. Sometimes one person sits by the fire and watches it and puts in more and then more sticks. They all sit around the fire and talk. Sometimes as we do, telling each other things, but it is not always like us. Sometimes one talks a long time, and the others sit and do not talk, but then They open Their mouths wide and make sounds that are like when we are afraid or shout to each other, or are like the Noisy Bird that tells us when the tiger is coming. But they are not afraid I think. They seem pleased. Do we do this? I have been watching us and listening but we are not the same. We never sit a long time while one speaks. We only say, There is a honey tree. Or, Be careful there's a steep place. Or, If you do that I'll bite you. Sometimes Their talk is nothing like ours, but more like birds talking together or like a tiger singing when the moon is full. Sometimes when my brothers are not near I try to make sounds like Theirs but all I make is sounds like a pig or bear. Then I am sad. I have been sad often since I first went down the mountain and saw Them. Sometimes I wish I had never found Their place and seen Them because my heart hurts so much.

Why are They different? How are They different? Sometimes I think, in every way, but then I think, They are the same shape, and we walk the same way.

When I first saw Them I thought, But They are like us, and then afterwards I knew They were not. I see Them and I see us more clearly than I did at the beginning.

In the cold time after when I first saw Them I was with my brothers in the cave while the snow was falling outside, and we were keeping warm, and I thought, But we do keep warm though we do not have the fire as They do. We have hair over us that keeps us warm. And then I thought, But They do have a covering, like a bark or like the leaves we hold over our heads when it is hot. All the cold months I thought about Them and the covering They have, and then when the warm came again I hid behind rocks and looked down at the river and I saw the Female alone at the river. She did not have the covering on her. She had taken it off. I saw she had hair only on her head and lower down where she will give birth. She is smooth all over, a brown colour like the inside of a thorn-tree bark, and she shines. The hair on her head is very long and smooth like black grass, or like the long hair on the necks of Their big animals. It is soft and long, not stiff and reddish, like ours. It was only then I saw how different it was to be smooth and without hair all over. That is why They use the fire to warm them. Without the fire They would die, even with the coverings, which are made of something I do not know. I kept thinking how different They are. I looked into the pool

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near our cave and saw I was not like Them but like my brothers, and I thought we are so ugly, and I was sad to think that we are the same with arms and legs and a head, the same size, but They have the long soft black hair that shines falling from their heads and we have ugly reddish hair all over.

Once when I had watched Them for a long time while They were all digging with sticks in the earth I found I had walked out from the rocks and stood where They could see me. They all stopped working, and stood close together, the way I and my brothers do when there is danger from a tiger or a bear. I stood there. I didn't go closer. I wanted Them to know I would not harm them. They all stood there and then made Their high bird calls and some made some shouts, and others came from their huts and stood looking at me and making Their sounds. One threw a stick at me, but then another held him, and They all shouted at the one who threw the stick. I began to walk towards Them. I had to do this. I felt I had to be with Them. I wanted Them. At first some moved back, and one ran away, but others stood and looked and when I was a leap away I stood still. I wondered if they wanted me as I wanted Them. Then the Female I saw before without her coverings in the river took a piece of food from her coverings and came forward holding out her hand with the food held towards me. The others made sounds, like a wind moaning, but she came forward little by little, a step and then a step, and I took the food. I knew she wanted me to eat it. I did not know what it was. Not fruit or animal but a soft tasteless thing. I ate it to the end because she gave it to me. They all stood watching. All the time They were talking, talking, not as we do, but a soft running talk up and down like birds chattering. I did not want to go away. One of them started to run off away from Them all down into the trees but then some went after him and brought him back. He shouted and waved his arms and I could see he wanted to hurt me. Then some of the others went back to their earth. They were digging the way we do to get insects and roots and when I saw this I took up a stick and began to do what They did. The noises they made then were like the noises they sometimes made when one speaks and They all listen. But I went on and the Female came and showed me how to hold the sharp stick, and then another gave her a stick that had a hard cold end to it and I used that and I worked there with Them. Not too close to Them because I did not want Them to think I would hurt Them. Then I saw the shadows coming dark and cold down from the mountain and it would soon be dark. So I said Goodbye, but knew They did not understand, and walked off back into the rocks and came back up here. I told my brothers. They were angry. They were afraid. They said I must not do this. They said that They would come hunting us. They said the reason we were here in this mountain was be-

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cause the Old Ones brought us from the other mountain we can see far off: They had hunted us a long time ago there. We must be careful of Them and keep out of sight. I knew my brothers were right, but I can't stop thinking of Them. I want to be with Them. I want Them.

Next day I went down and found Them digging in the earth and one or two came up close and stretched their mouths and clapped their hands together. They were pleased. Soon it rained. They all went off into their huts when the rain began. I followed Them. I wanted to be with Them near their tame fire. At the first hut They shouted at me and waved their arms but the next one was where the Female was and she stopped Them from sending me off again. I was afraid for a long time, standing outside the hole in the hut, seeing how the flames were leaping softly inside, but the Female kept making movements with her hands that I knew meant, Come in, and at last I went in and sat as far from Them and the fire as I could with my back to the logs of the wall. The fire leaped safely there, red and wonderful and warm on my legs that I stretched out, and outside the rain was cold. On the flame was a stone that was hollow and in it was food, and then they put some of the food on a flat thing like a stone and gave it to me. I ate the food and said in my own way that I liked it. They talked a lot, They never stop talking, then They came one by one, always afraid, to touch me, touch my stiff rough hair, touch my face and arms. Then one, a half-grown one, a boy, put his hand down to my tender place and laughed and pulled – at this they were angry and one hit him and he made a loud noise and water fell out of his eyes.

The Female stroked me with her soft hands that have no hair on them.

Her long soft hair was close to me and I put my hand to her hair, but she jerked her head and moved away from me back to where she sat with the others.

I stayed in the hut that day while the rain came down cold and then when it grew dark I was going out but They showed me I could stay. So I slept that night as I do in our cave, sitting with my back against the wall, my arms wrapped around myself for warmth, because my brothers were not there to hold. But next day it still rained and I began to be afraid of my brothers: they might think They had killed me and then come to thrown stones at Their houses. So I held up my hands to Them and shook them a little up and down and made a noise that for us would mean, I am sad to go, and went out into the rain and came back up here.

I told my brothers. But now they were not only angry, they were afraid. I could see they didn't like to be close to me. They kept smelling me: that meant the smell of The Others was on me. That night when we went to our cave for safety and sleep they huddled together at the end of the cave and I was by myself just as I had been the night before with

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Them. And my brothers looked at me just as They did: as if I was so different they didn't want to be near me. I thought I must not go back to Them: I don't want my brothers to make me go away from them. So I went with my brothers to the valley where the fruit is ripe, and that night we slept up in a big tree we use for sleeping when the fruit is ready, and next day we three chased a hare and killed it and ate it. But I was thinking how They put meat into that hollow thin stone and put water in it and then on the fire it becomes something else. I did not tell my brothers. I was thinking of Them. I wanted Them. I wanted to be where They are. I wanted more of that soft easy food because it is what They eat. I wanted to see the Female's dark hair in the light of the flames which is like water with the red setting sun in it. I wanted all of Them, their high running voices like birds, and the soft warmth of their fire. I wanted Them.

And I had to go back. When my brothers were still asleep one morning I went off and saw there was no smoke coming from the huts. I knew They often left one place of huts and went to another but this time they did not mean to be gone for long because they had their animals in a place that had stones around it too high for the animals to get out. They are big animals, bigger than They are or we are. And they have four legs, like deer, but they are bigger than even our biggest deer. They have long hair falling from their necks, black hair and it reminded me of the Female's hair. I went into that place where the animals were, and they were afraid of me at first, but then not, and went on eating the dry grass They had put there for them to eat. I went to the animal that was black, with black shining hair falling from its neck, and I stroked the hair, though it was not as soft as the Female's hair. Then I wove it together, as I saw some of Them weave Theirs, the hair separated and then plaited as we put together thin branches to make a bed or long grass to keep the hot sun off. While I did this I thought of the Female and her hair. I thought I would like to have one of their Females come up to where I and my brothers live but I know she is too soft and small and not strong and she did not have enough hair everywhere to keep her warm high in the snows where we live.

While I stood by the animal and played with its hair I was not looking at the huts, and then I did and saw some children had crept out, with stones and sticks and they were all around me. But I shouted and leaped over the stones and ran back up here.

I stayed while the sun came and went for many times and all the time I thought of Them and wondered why They are so fine and without hair and knew how to cover themselves and have fires and make plants grow in the bare earth. And how They make their voices sing up and down. Why are They like what They are? Why are we like what we are?

When the snow came down on Them, They put the seeds of the

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plants in a hut. These seeds are what They grind in a hollow stone to make the soft food. I hid in the rocks waiting for Them to come out, so They would ask me to go with Them into a hut, but the openings into the huts were not there, and then once the hut opened and the Female came out with a Male, and she shook her hand at me, but the Male with her pulled her back into the hut and the hut closed. So I saw I must come back up here.

It has been a long bad snow-time. Very cold. We have been hungry. We slept most of the time. It got so cold I was with them in a huddle, our arms around each other and I would not let them push me away. Soon I must have lost the smell of Them, for my brothers were glad of my warmth with theirs. Sometimes I think they forget quickly, more quickly than I do. This thought makes me afraid. Once when the storm stopped for a little we went out and found a sick hare and we ate that. There were nuts on a tree and we had a feed, but then I remembered Them and what They do, and I pulled down branches of nuts and dragged them to the cave. My brothers scolded me and hit me but then they saw what I was doing was useful. If we can make beds of grass for the winter, then why not keep nuts or grass heads? We always eat the grass heads from our bedding when there is no other food. Several times when the snow stopped we went out and found nuts and some berries the birds had missed, and so we had a little food for the worst days. It was a long long cold time. Eight moons got thin and fat and thin again, and then I saw how far below us, below the snows, the green was back. All that long cold time I was thinking of Them in Their warm huts and the fires burning and how They talk, making sounds like birds or like water. Whenever I was awake I thought of Them. Sometimes my thoughts of Them woke me and I sat at the cave mouth wishing I was with Them, until I got too cold and had to go back to the huddle of my brothers.

When the air was warm we four went down through the high snow that was melting into the streams where the Females live in their place with their Male. We found them outside their cave on a place where the snows had gone. Each had an infant. Their Male was not there: he was dead. He was an old male. And now my brothers and I looked angrily at each other. We growled and scuffled together, but then each ran up through the trees and the half-gone snow to the Females, who stood waiting, each with her infant held close. Now that there was no Male we did not have to wait until he had gone off or sneak in when he was mating with one. But there were four of us and three of them. My brothers hit each other and wrestled and I went in quickly and mated with the one I got last time the warmth came. They saw what I was doing and all three came to fight me but then one took his opportunity and grabbed a female and then another. Soon we all had our turns and

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then again and again. I was thinking of Them and their small soft Females with their long black hair and now these Females seemed hard and large and ugly with their rough reddish hair.

I saw if I wanted I could stay with them and be their Male, but my heart said no. But we played with their infants for a while while the Females watched us. They are always nervous when we hold their young. Yet we never hurt them. We stayed there while the snows went away in their valley and then there were leaves on the trees and we went wandering through the forests eating the leaves and the caterpillars and the eggs in the nests. And all the time I thought of Them, of Them, I thought all the time only of Them and I knew I was sick, or sickening, for my heart hurt so much. One early morning when my brothers were still asleep in a nest of branches high in a tree I slid down and ran off around the curve of the mountain and then ran and ran and then I came down into the green and Their place. They were all out of their huts and making another piece of earth ready to put seeds into. When They saw me They shouted. I thought it was anger and They would hurt me and I ran away a little and then I looked back and saw They were pleased and shaking Their hands at me. The children were jumping up and down and shouting and hitting their hands together. I slowly went back to Them. I stood there some way from Them the way I did the first time and looked for the Female with the long hair and then I saw her. She had an infant. It did not look very different from our infants. Ours do not have very much hair when they are born, but they are pinker and more wrinkled than Their infants. She was with her Male. She came forward and gave me some food, and I saw he did not like this. I wanted to hold her infant, and tried to take it, but he pulled her back. My heart hurt and I was making the noises an infant makes when it is not pleased. She saw this and while he kept his hand on her arm she held out the infant so I could see it. Its eyes were black and shining and it was smooth and pale and very small and on its head was a soft black fluff like a new bird.

Then They showed me what they wanted me to do. They were carrying away stones from the earth. Some were big stones. I began carrying the big stones to the side of the cleared earth. We were piling them there. Now I saw where the stones came from they used to make the big safe place for their four-legged animals with the long hair on their necks. But they weren't in the safe place now, they were out eating the new grass under the trees.

I worked there with Them all day. When the sun was high They gave me food. I sat near Them and ate. When the dark came I tried to go with the Female I liked and her infant but her Male said no. My heart hurt. Some youngsters let me into their hut and I sat against the wall and looked at their fire and thought how easy our winters would be if we had

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this safe fire.

I worked there with Them for some days and again I became sad because of my brothers. This time I showed Them I wanted to take fire and They helped me, putting the red fire stones into a long stick that had a hole, and putting leaves down over the red. I carried this up the mountain and when I got to our cave my brothers had been and gone. I tried to find some wood and some dry leaves but then the fire stones were black and cold.

I saw that if I wanted to keep fire alive I must gather a lot of wood and grass but up there in the snows there is no wood and grass. And what would my brothers say? For they had not seen the fire burning in its safe place in the huts.

I thought a long time about the fire. I could not keep it alive unless my brothers wanted it too. Down there there is always someone watching the fire and bringing wood for it. And we would have to move down the mountain to a lower place where finding wood was easy. We would have to change everything we did, to have the safe fire.

I wandered till I found my brothers. There were only two now – one had gone off to be the Male of the Females. They were eating flowers off the tree that has a smell that if you sniff it too much you have to go down on four legs, or sit or sleep until you can stand on two legs again. My brothers would not look at me. They moved away when I came near them. I gave them some of the food They had given me. My brothers sniffed it, and tasted. They did not like it. I did not like it either when I first had it. My brothers did not like me. I was so afraid of losing my place with them that I stayed and they got used to me again, and I went with them to visit our Females and our infants, and my brother who was their Male now let us mate with them a little. But all the time I thought of Them, I could feel Them inside me, I longed for Them and their soft high birds' voices and long shining hair.

I went back to Them though I was afraid to leave my brothers. I found Them digging in the earth they had cleared of stones. I worked with Them. Sometimes I forgot to keep a distance and was close, as if I was one of Them, but I saw how They didn't like it and always made a distance. I did not know why. I had never hurt Them, I had never made any noise of warning or threat. Then one day I dropped my dung not far from one and saw on their faces a look I understood. It was what I felt so often with my brothers now and with the Females when I saw how big and ugly and rough they are. I understood suddenly that They always drop their dung in a special place. I found a place in the rocks and I put my dung there. They saw me and I heard Them talk while They pointed to me and made sounds like the Noisy Bird. They were pleased. I could see it. I wanted to make Them pleased, I wanted to be like Them. When

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They went to a pool in the river and stood in the water and splashed Themselves I was afraid, but I went too when They did and I tried to make myself go right into the water, and even let myself lie on the water as They do. But I could not. I stayed in the shallow water at the edge and splashed and rubbed myself as They did. They pointed at me and made the noise that means They are surprised and pleased. I know a lot of different kinds of voice now, both ours and Theirs, but I had never thought of it before I was with Them. When They got out of the water They dried the cold water off them with that covering They put on their smooth shining skins, but my hair was cold and wet all morning and I got a cough. The winds were cold that day.

I sat in a corner in the hut and could not go out, but coughed and my head hurt. The Female I like came and gave me something to drink out of the thing they use for drink, like a very big leaf curled, which is what we use, but it was a hard cold thing like stone. She came several times, and now her Male did not come and I saw how he was not afraid of me now, or that I would hurt her.

They all came and rubbed my back and head. I liked it so much because I missed my brothers and how when we sleep or sit we are close and put our arms around each other. Sometimes a child came and hung around my neck and sat close and played with the hair on my arms and I was pleased. Once I saw a Female stretch her neck out, and put her hair on a log of wood, and then take the piece of thin stone, and cut off the ends of her hair. She was going to throw the bits of black hair away but I took it and tried to put it on my arms and on my head, thinking it might grow there and be my hair. She made the noise like the Noisy Bird and called the Others. And They were not angry but came to rub me and stroke me. I could hear myself making the noises infants make. I felt my eyes making the water that Their eyes make, when They are sad.

And then again, the same thing. I was afraid for my brothers. Though I did not want to leave Them I did, and found my brothers and it was all the same as before. They knew I had been with Them and did not like it when I talked of them. But I saw there was something new. In the front part of the cave there is a big place and they were filling it with food for the winter. There was a honeycomb and fruits they had let dry and branches of nuts. I realised it would soon be cold again, and I worked with them gathering nuts and fruits. I wondered if they were pleased with me because I had told them how the Others gathered food for the long cold time but they had forgotten I had told them and now they thought it was their own idea. When the place was full of food I said we should go and tell our Females to collect food for the cold time, and they agreed, though they did not want to like anything I said.

We were outside of our cave on the flat place there when . . . but I

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don't know how to say what happened. There was a terrible noise. We had never heard anything like that noise, worse than the big storms that make sounds like rocks falling off a cliff or worse than the winds that scream around the cave in the cold time. The noise was like the beating of a wings of a bird bigger than any bird we knew and then over the trees came black birds but they were not birds, for how could any bird be so big. The noise seemed to shake us inside, and bang inside our heads, and my brothers wanted to run away into the trees but the big birds would see them there and I made them go into the cave, at the back, for I knew the big birds were hunting for us, they kept swooping low like eagles over hares or rats. The big black birds were hunting us a long time, and my brothers were screaming and crying though I tried to make them quiet, but then one was quiet. And when the big birds had gone away, a brother was dead. He died of fear. There were two of us now, and the dead one was heavy. We did not know what to do. We must not take the dead one out and push him down over the cliff because the Big Birds might see him and know there were others near. We waited until everything was quiet, and then the ordinary birds begin to talk quietly as they do, and we dragged the dead brother out, and around the corner of the mountain and to another cave lower than our cave and left him there. We knew a tiger would come, or the dogs that always run together.

My brother was crying and he was shivering and shaking and when he could talk he said it was all because of me, because I went to the Others and now They were hunting us. I said I did not think They would hunt us, They were our friends. But he screamed at me and ran away from me down to where our Females are with my other Brother, and he said he would make them go right away from their place back to the mountains where the Old Ones brought us from long ago. I said that the Old Ones came from those mountains because they were afraid of being hunted there, but my brother said it would be safer there than here. I said I would come with him to our Females but he screamed at me and threw stones and ran away screaming and throwing stones, and shouting he would tell our Females and their Male to kill me if I came.

And now I had no place with my brothers. And I was afraid to go to the Others. But I went slowly down to Their place. I was looking all the time everywhere for the Big Birds. I did not see them. It was quiet. When I came to Their place, They came out to meet me. I could see They were pleased. They shook Their hands at me and called in Their soft voices. But then I saw there was something new, something not there before. I could not at first understand and then I saw that among Them were Those of a different sort. They were pale like grubs or worms and they had coverings different from the ones I knew. They were telling Them, the ones I know, what to do. They kept looking at me and

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stretching out their arms and I did not like it and I began to run away. I had not run far when I felt a stinging in my buttocks and I fell down. Then I knew I was being carried and I thought that after all They, my friends, had put me in a trap. Though I could not move, I knew that the new ones, not my friends handled me, cutting off bits of my hair with the sharp stones, tying something tight around my head. Then over my face was fitted a tight wet thing and I knew I was being killed. I could not breathe. Yet I could not struggle but something kept me heavy and still. Then I woke up completely. The new They, the ones I had not seen before, were walking off down into the trees. Then I saw that in the trees was one of the great black birds and they were getting inside it. I began to cry, like an infant, from fear. I woke completely because of my fear. I was still stiff and sore. On the inside of my hand was a sore place which was bleeding. The big black bird went up into the sky, and again its noise was beating inside me and shook me and I felt I would die like my brother. The Others, the ones I knew, came then, and sat around me. The Female was stroking my head. Water was coming out of her eyes. Some children rubbed my back. I felt very sick. I felt very sad. Now I knew They were not my friends, not as I thought They were. And my brothers were not my brothers, they would kill me if I went close to them. Besides, they would have gone off with our Females somewhere far and I did not know where they were.

Slowly I got strength and sat up and then I saw that around my leg was a thing that fitted close to my flesh. Some of my hair was caught in it and it itched. It was a smooth hard thing like the rope we take from inside the bark of a tree, but hard. I was trying to take it off and They were talking to me and shaking Their heads. They were making the noises like the infants make and I was making the same noises.

Water was falling from their eyes and water was falling from my eyes. And all the time one or another stroked me or patted me. The Female put her face into my fur and when she took it away my fur was wet.

I slowly got to my feet. I was weak and shaky. I slowly walked off from them though my heart was crying for Them. I came back up here to the cave. I am alone now. The sky is getting low and it is full of snow. Soon the snow will lie thick. I hear myself making the sounds infants make. I keep looking to see if my brothers are coming though I know they will not come. I keep saying to myself that when they come I must not do as I do when I am with Them – make my dung in a separate place or go to the river when it is not frozen and put water on myself. I must be like my brothers – but they will not come. And what can I do about the hard tight thing around my leg? If my brothers saw it they would kill me, I know that. I am afraid of it. Sometimes it seems to me alive. I try to take it off. I have tried a sharp stone and my teeth. I feel it is listening to

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me as if it knows what I am doing. It knows what I am thinking.

And all the time I think of Them and how They are down in their place sitting inside Their shelters because it is cold with their safe fire burning and They talk to each other in Their high birds' voices and sometimes one talks and the others listen.

Why am I not like Them, why cannot I come to Them, why do They hunt me and make traps for me? Why cannot I be like Them and not a big clumsy ugly hairy beast like my brothers?

Sometimes I think I will go to the cliff near the top of the mountain and jump off it. Then I would be dead and the heavy pain inside me would not hurt me. This thought frightens me. I am sure I have never thought anything like it before. I am sure if I said it to my brothers they would not understand. They do not understand what I say now. I cannot say to them what I am thinking. But this strong hard smooth thing on my leg sometimes seems to talk to me and I don't like what it is saying. I am a prisoner now.

There is a thing I can do, I can use my teeth and gnaw off my foot and then the smooth hard thing would slide off. But how could I live without my foot? No, I think when the snows go I will go to the high cliff and jump off it. I do not want to go on living with this heavy pain in my chest. I want to go to Them and tell Them what I feel, but now They are not my friends and I am afraid of Them, but I think of Them all the time and when I go to sleep I think of Them, pictures of Them are in my sleep and I seem to hear Their high birds' voices and I feel their soft hands stroking me and I feel the Female's face in my fur and the wet from her eyes. I think of Them all the time. I want to be with Them. I want to be Them. Why can't I be Them? Why are we so different I can't be Them?

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STEPHEN KOCH

Bloomsbury and Espionage

There is a link between culture and espionage.

To a very remarkable degree, the most interesting elites in the twentieth-century democracies chose to define their taste and language through the vocabulary of revolution and the dissociation of sensibility. The democratic elites were linked – they were sometimes even identical – to what Lionel Trilling called the "adversary culture." Picasso would hang on bankers' walls. This simple and salient fact about life in the land of the bourgeoisie was noticed early and exploited with verve by the propagandists who guided and advised the Comintern secret service, and the *apparat* did not fail to take the obvious next step, seizing upon this truth of the adversary culture – and of the modernism at its center – as a wedge into power. It is in the bond between the language of the democratic elites and the language of revolt, that culture is tied to espionage. And it is likewise in this sense that the famous Cambridge circle of spies – Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Kim Philby – might be more accurately known as the "Bloomsbury spies."

Well, to speak more precisely, they were Bloomsbury's *children:* The second generation. In 1932, the brightest and best of the *marxisant* youth at Cambridge and Oxford were, often literally, progeny of the original Bloomsbury circle. One of Anthony Blunt's first lovers was Virginia Woolf's nephew, Julian Bell; it was Blunt and his people who guided Julian Bell toward Spain, where he was killed. Blunt likewise recruited Michael Straight in the midst of his grief over the death in Spain of John Cornford, the son of two academic members of the Bloomsbury group, Frances and Francis Cornford. Burgess and Blunt breathed the Bloomsbury atmosphere – an affinity perfected in Burgess's intimacy with Harold Nicolson. The Cambridge spies began their careers as young people raised in the world of Bloomsbury, and they must be counted

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among its heirs.

Our understanding of Bloomsbury has become so dominated by the presence and genius of Virginia Woolf that it is sometimes forgotten that the coterie was less her creation than that of her intimate (and one-time fiancé), Lytton Strachey. Strachey always saw himself as an "animateur," a man with a mission. He came to great clarity about that mission very early in his life. Seizing on the question of taste, Strachey proposed to redefine the ethic and nature of the British elite. While he was still an undergraduate at Cambridge, and later, in and around the First World War, Strachey set his essentially Oedipal task: To define a new era in British opinion by organizing the most shining offspring of the eminent Victorians into a group bent upon destroying the philistinism, hypocrisy, and repression which, he claimed, defined the loathed and loved world of their parents.

In practical fact, what Strachey summoned up in the Bloomsbury coterie became a kind of intellectual mafia created to allow the offspring of the British establishment to join the adversary culture without any sacrifice to their status in the hierarchy into which they had been born. The Bloomsberries correctly understood the modernist revolution to be the greatest cultural force of their time, and they also believed it was a challenge to everything their parents had thought important. Strachey showed his followers how to join that culture in such a way that their elite standing would be enhanced. This was not easy, but Strachey, greatest offspring of a British family notable in all its branches for molding and manipulating British opinion, accomplished it. His purpose plainly was to reinforce rather than undermine the aristocratic status into which the coterie's members had been born. Plebeian or non-U types, no matter how impressive, had no place in the network. The need to knock his parents off their pedestal was not exactly D. H. Lawrence's problem. Bloomsbury therefore treated Lawrence as a parvenu, and rejected the "underbred" James Joyce, until the genius of both had become so successful they could only make themselves ridiculous by denying it. Bloomsbury was an in-house operation of the British elite.

Strachey himself was a rather nasty item. Julian Bell's brother Quentin Bell describes him as "a creature torturing and self-tortured, slipping from one agony to another, a wretched sighing hand-wringing misfit, a quite impossible person." Though time has partly justified Strachey with Bloomsbury's many triumphs of taste and influence, one must note that apart from Virginia Woolf Bloomsbury produced almost no artists who can hold their own in the true first rank. Following Strachey's lead, the coterie remained far too preoccupied with questions of mere taste to touch real greatness. As for debunking the Victorians: One also can't help noting that a quintessential Victorian, George Eliot, wrote far more intel-

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ligently and with far more real feeling about sex than the modernist Virginia Woolf.

Still, Strachey's subversion of middlebrow mores needed doing. There was power, inevitability, and great beauty in the modernist experience. Only in retrospect do Strachey's disingenuousness and intellectual perversity seem to dominate his struggle to provide his allies with an ever-more-secure platform for despising the British middle class.

For the coterie's rationale Strachey borrowed a cult of "friendship" from the Cambridge philosopher George Moore, so that to this day E. M. Forster's silly pseudo-thought (it was borrowed from Moore: the business about having the guts to betray one's country before betraying one's friend) is almost invariably raised in any discussion of the Cambridge spies. And when your "friends" are collaborating in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people who do not have the privilege of your acquaintance? What then?

Yet for all his talk about the sanctity of "friendship" in the Bloomsbury group, Strachey protested much too much. The reverse is more like it. As we know from the incredibly voluminous documentation of every shiver and sigh of every single member of the coterie, there was nothing so wonderfully amiable in Bloomsbury conduct. Even by the ungentle standards of most literary cliques, Bloomsbury was exceptionally malicious within its own ranks, and with outsiders cruel to the point of systematic sadism. All the talk about "friendship" concealed quite different interests.

Paul Johnson describes it well: "Not for nothing was Strachey the son of a general. He had a genius for narcissistic elitism and ran the coterie with an iron, though seemingly languid hand. From the Apostles he grasped the principles of group power: The ability not merely to exclude but to be seen to exclude. He perfected the art of unapproachability and rejection: a Bloomsbury mandarin could wither with a glance or a tone of voice. Within his magic circle exclusiveness became a kind of mutual life-support system. He and [Leonard] Woolf called it 'the Method.' "

Friendship was not the true motive, any more than the long-term aim was a social club for bright undergraduates. Strachey's legacy was to show how elite standing could be encoded in anti-establishment contempt – always in the name of friendship, friendship. Nonsense, of course. First, last, and always, the real politics of Bloomsbury was a search for elite cultural power in England.

In the first generation, few members of the Bloomsbury coterie were fellow travellers and fewer still were true Stalinists. Leonard Woolf's soft-left writing on Imperial policy is more like it, even though the Woolfs' political mentors, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, became more or less abject Stalinist propagandists. But Strachey's legacy, which placed the new man-

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darins throughout British publishing, broadcasting, academia, and intellectual life was, to say the least, fertile ground.

Which is where Blunt came in.

On the public level, the move to Stalinize Bloomsbury taste was led by Otto Katz and the Münzenberg apparatus, using British fronts such as the Left Book Club and its many appendages. Covertly the process was led by Blunt and Burgess, guided by various members of the Soviet secret apparatus, probably assisted by a plant in the London offices of the Secret Intelligence Services (SIS), silently sustained by the talent-spotters throughout the universities and in the Münzenberg-Gibarti propaganda network, and tied to the Soviets through a dual NKVD-Comintern network running through Amsterdam, Berlin, and Paris. The process was in motion by at least 1927, when "Ludwik" – the code name of Ignace Reiss, a founding father of the Soviet services – set up shop in Amsterdam. Hitler had nothing to do with its founding. It was complete by 1935, and it culminated in Spain, where certain observers such as George Orwell began to dare to dissent.

Back at Strachey's Cambridge, the obvious heir to all this was Blunt. For the Cambridge spies were Bloomsbury's heirs by direct line of descent. The crucible for both was the "Cambridge Conversation Club," the Apostles, a long-established campus secret society for aristocratic young intellectuals: Tennyson and Hallam had been members. Strachey and Leonard Woolf had taken over the Apostles for their own political purposes before the war, and a generation later Blunt and Burgess remade it for theirs. It was Blunt who saw what rich possibilities were waiting to be used by the *apparat* in the Apostles.

A secret club of brilliant young men, the Apostles had been the ideal venue for Strachey's mingled fantasies of sex and power, played out among corrupted tousle-haired youth. By only slightly modifying Strachey's essential principles, Blunt transformed it into an equally ideal arena of *apparat* recruitment. It was elite, secret, and bound by its own loyalties. Controlling it, Blunt and Burgess were able to capture the imaginations of Bloomsbury's children, while preparing them, as Strachey had prepared their parents, for lives of leadership nicely fused with scorn for the established order. Within Strachey's supercilious view of the British middle class was encoded an assumed right to rule that class. This was precisely the contempt which Blunt found so congruent to his own disdaining soul, and so *very* useful as a political instrument.

One link was Blunt's early love affair with Virginia Woolf's nephew, Julian Bell, who ten years later died in Spain. Julian wrote home to his mother in some detail about this adventure (his sexual initiation), the high point of which was Blunt spiriting Julian away to a culture conference in

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a French town called Poitigny, run for fellow travellers by a complex Soviet sympathizer close to the original Bloomsberries, Prince Dimitri Mirsky. In fact, Prince Mirsky may well have been the inventor of the culture conference as an instrument of elite propaganda. Prince Mirsky died, mad, in the gulag.

Anthony Blunt's affair with Julian Bell ended when Julian proceeded to a relationship with a woman, and then "a series of mistresses." But while it was going on, he wrote to his mother, "I feel certain you won't be upset or shocked. Still, don't let it go any further, or it might get round to Virginia, and then one might as well put a notice in the *Times*."

Once exposed, Blunt did not defect to the USSR, and it is clear that unlike Philby he despised the mere thought of life in the Utopia he served. But then, what did Blunt not despise? Though his suits fitted perfectly and though he hated the socialist motherland, he was a hard-core Stalinist *apparatchik* quite without conscience toward either of his countries, his "ideals," or his friends. Least of all did he care for that abstraction, humanity. He despised "humanity." His snobbery was absolute. He was a manipulator of genius, with a talent for subtle intimidation and for measuring the vanity of his victims that makes the efforts of Guy Burgess seem amateurish fumblings. His chosen role was to be the most sublimely placed insider of all, the perfect Prufrock of the British establishment. "Deferential, glad to be of use/ Politic, cautious, and meticulous," Blunt was invariably to be found just a step behind and a shade to the left of power, the associate and even intimate of principal figures throughout British life, from the royal establishment, to the Rothschilds, to the highest levels of the intelligence services. Most intellectuals are involved in what might be called powerless power. Blunt wanted more: He sought covert but real command, power he could exercise *without seeming to*. He was made for duplicity.

His relation to women – some women at least – seems to have been that of a needy penitent. As exposure drew near, he became genuinely, even childishly, terrified at the prospect of losing the good opinion of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. Once, quietly drunk in a taxi with Rosamund Lehmann, he suddenly burst into tears, and incomprehensibly began to beg her forgiveness – though to be sure this bizarre display may actually have been a charade used to test what Rosamund's lover, Goronwy Rees, as someone who knew about Blunt's ring, may have confided in their pillow talk.

Toward men, on the other hand, Blunt's attitude was one of hard, suppressed, controlling rage, and a silent but relentless search for the point of vulnerability. This he customarily found, not surprisingly, in the secrets of either ambition or sex, standing or shame. Better yet, both.

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He was really a very high-class blackmailer. It all swung on a kind of sadomasochistic hinge, which is in some way reminiscent of Strachey's ethic of ambiguous contempt. Blunt invariably put himself in a position to despise those he served. He despised the sleek and fluting members of the establishment, whom he viewed as history's fools, doomed to be swept away. He likewise despised the Soviets who ran him, and whom he brushed aside even as he obeyed. Bumblers, clods, boors. In the void between servility and loathing Blunt found power.

That so many of the Cambridge spies were homosexual can likewise be traced to Strachey and Bloomsbury. Strachey's cult of "friendship" was in practice a cult of homosexuality. Strachey genuinely believed that as a homosexual he belonged to an erotic elite that had passed beyond the crudity and grossness of heterosexual manhood into the realms of finer feeling. In a letter to Keynes, Strachey speaks of Cambridge, with its "sad atmosphere of paradox and paederasty" as the ideal place to launch his critique of English life, a critique that was simultaneously contemptuous, masochistic, enraged, and (seemingly) passive. Yet, he went on, "we can't be content with telling the truth" even though "we must tell the whole truth and the whole truth is the Devil. . . . It's madness for us to dream of making dowagers understand that feelings are good, when we say in the same breath that the best ones are sodomitical . . . our time will come about a hundred years hence."

Maly must have been especially shrewd on this score. Communist morality and Marxism-Leninism in general have been relentlessly hostile to any variety of homosexual freedom. Whenever the subject is raised, it has usually been inside a dank fog of talk about bourgeois decadence. My suspicion is that Anthony Blunt and Guy Burgess used their own great shrewdness to make their Soviet controls see how a homosexual coterie based on Strachey's model could be exploited, both in its unstated loyalties and its unstated possibilities for blackmail, and thereby form the basis for an espionage ring. I have no evidence to prove it, but some such conversation may well have taken place, and if so, it must have been an interesting one. In the files of the former Soviet Union, there exist shrewd, most far-sighted assessments of the role played within the ring by homosexuality. They are explicit about the ways the half-seen sexual bond held Burgess, and they stress the ways in which his sexual alienation could be used. Similar reports are no less insightful about the long reach into the elite that this sort of "homintern" bond provided. (Bear in mind too that certain members of the ring were not at all homosexual. Kim Philby was certainly not in the least homosexual, and the self-tortured Donald Maclean can be called homosexual only rather tendentiously.)

Certainly there was very little tolerance for homosexuals in Stalin's apparatus, though of course there were plenty of homosexuals in it.

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Young radicals of the early thirties clutched the fantasy that communism meant sexual freedom – and in the privileged West, in some sense it partly did. Certainly, radicalism and Bohemianism were intertwined, joined in that angry righteous perspective of the intellect that seeks compensation for feeling at once set apart, different and shunned.

But inside the *apparat,* communist puritanism and the almost incredible bigotry of Stalin's entourage meant that most homosexuals and bisexuals lived if anything with more furtiveness and self-contempt than their non-communist brothers and sisters. One thinks of Whittaker Chambers's agonies over his homosexual yearnings, or Louis Aragon, poet of sexual freedom, suppressing his desires while Elsa Triolet was alive, only to emerge as a flamboyant embarrassment to the Party once she was dead.

Naturally, none of this meant anything to homosexuals who had the misfortune actually to live in Utopia. At the very time that Amabel Williams-Ellis, Lytton Strachey's cousin once removed and sister of John Strachey, was singing the praises of the White Sea Canal, Stalin had dispatched three thousand homosexuals to the agonies of slave labor and early death in that project. Visiting fellow travellers were often manipulated sexually. André Gide was surrounded by attractive sexual partners and seduced into compromising situations. These were used first to manipulate him, and later for the invective against him when he produced *Return to the U.S.S.R.*

Yet Countess Karolyi records with what whoops of laughter the *apparat* heard of Gide's plan to plead for homosexual liberty during his ludicrous (and, for Gide's honor, mercifully never held) audience with Stalin.

Münzenberg made the universities a center of his interest in order to touch the adversary culture in the place where it was shaped. In Cambridge, he and Gibarti were represented by the League Against Imperialism and by the two dons closest to it: Roy Pascal and Maurice Dobb. These two teachers had a profound effect on all the Cambridge conspirators. But after 1932, Otto Katz also made England one of the bases of his power.

In fact, in the summer of 1933, Otto's English was strangely proficient as he set foot in London for what seems to have been the first time. I can find no evidence that Otto had ever lived before in any English-speaking country before then; yet from the moment he set foot in Dover, probably incognito, his English was at least workable and wisecracking. It was imperfect, to be sure; filled with all kinds of Teutonic errors, but fluent. Where did he pick it up? As a schoolboy in Prague? Perhaps some sort of training in Moscow? Wherever he learned it, Otto could say pretty much what he wanted to say in English. And he wanted to say a great

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deal.

He had arrived at a moment of special richness in the history of totalitarianism. Theodore Maly was by then well established in England. Maly had come to England well after Ludwik had placed his recruit in the upper track of British intelligence, back in 1927. Maly and Ludwik worked together, from London to Amsterdam. Maly remained in England through most of the thirties, operating now and then from an office next door to the one used by Gibarti's propagandists in London, an outfit known as the Anti-War International, which was in fact the British office of Amsterdam-Pleyel. The front man for the Anti-War International was a Münzenberg-man recruited from the Bloomsbury elect, Lytton's cousin once removed, John Strachey. As usual, propaganda and espionage were functioning hand in hand.

As his train pulled into London, Otto had many friends already waiting for him. Friends *and* the British secret service, for Otto was under the surveillance of SIS "watchers," probably from the moment of his arrival. In later years Otto made it plain that he was fully aware of this surveillance from the moment it began. One wonders exactly who or what made him aware of it.

Katz's immediate task was to stage the show of the Reichstag Fire Counter-Trial, assisted by an unstoppable ball of English political fire, none other than Red Ellen Wilkinson. Ellen Wilkinson was a driving force in Labor's left wing; she had also been a hard-left collaborator with Willi and Louis in many a radical effort gone by. To some not quite discernible degree, this founding personality in the British Labor party must have been conscious of Otto's true role. Only a fool in her position would have failed to guess that Otto was a Soviet agent, and Ellen Wilkinson was nobody's fool. Or rather she was *almost* nobody's fool. She had been, for a while, Stalin's fool, though she later became a staunch anti-Stalinist, and Otto fooled her sufficiently to use her anti-fascism as cover for the arrangement with Hitler. But then with that, he fooled the world. Ellen remained under Katz's spell through Munich. It has been suspected that he had an affair with her. Certainly they were close. He guided her through Spain. Even the summer of the pact, Ellen quite contentedly paid a visit to Otto on the Riviera.

Another contact waiting for Otto in England was the lifelong Stalinist and propagandist, Claud Cockburn. Cockburn had first encountered Otto at least the year before at Amsterdam-Pleyel. In years to come, Cockburn and Otto would work together in many an adventure – in London, in Spain, and doubtless in America as well. Their link would peak in surreality during 1952, when Otto stood wavering in the dock in Prague, mouthing his "confession" and covering for some important secret service

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tracks. In his speech Otto told how he had betrayed the Revolution by serving Trotsky and Lord Beaverbrook in conspiracy with (among others) that ruthless agent of the Imperialists, Claud Cockburn.

What was their real connection? By a curious coincidence, sometime between Amsterdam-Pleyel and the day Otto arrived in London for the Counter-Trial, Claud Cockburn had summoned up a London rumor sheet, an insider's political rag known as the *Week*. The idea behind the *Week* was to publish for the select few a weekly paper filled with the very best political gossip, all carefully but ingeniously arranged to serve the hard-left and Stalinist position at any given moment. It was plain that the *Week* could and should not have a mass or even a large circulation. The gratifying sense of being in the select number of those truly on the inside does not flow from reports in *Time* and *Newsweek*. The *Week* has been called a "conspiracy theory bulletin." Its targets were precisely the insiders it was designed to reach: a splendid strategy. For a number of years, Franklin Roosevelt based many of his most important decisions on information about British and European politics he'd found in the *Week*. He never missed an issue.

But where on earth did Cockburn pick up this stuff? There were plenty of lies in the paper, but much of its information was dead-on accurate, and often *very* much from the inside. From which desks were these sizzling tales lifted? Cockburn always shrugged off the question. He got his stuff from pals, he said; he had all kinds of pals. Nothing much more than the babble of the boys in the pubs of Fleet Street, where to be sure Cockburn was an inveterate habitué. That and certain . . . well, let's call them "correspondents" in Germany. Certain "friends" in Paris. You know. People. Here and there.

Perhaps. But the *Week* was founded very shortly after Cockburn had a high-level meeting in Berlin with Willi and Otto. Its appearance in London political life coincides precisely with the period of Cockburn's most significant intimacy with Katz. Is it mere coincidence that Otto was a witting agent of both the Comintern and the NKVD, trained by Willi and Radek for precisely this kind of information and disinformation? Can that fact really have no relevance? More likely, some significant part of the rumors Cockburn spread in the *Week* originated with the *apparat* and were supplied by Claud's best guide through that wilderness of mirrors, Katz.

Some such thing probably took place in New York, as well. Ralph Ingersoll was an influential friend and colleague of Henry Luce, who in the 1930s became the lover of Otto's devoted political protégé, and dear friend, Lillian Hellman. Not only was Ingersoll besotted with Hellman, but under Hellman's guidance the political life of this senior executive in

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the Luce organization assumed a decidedly Stalinist cast. He soon became a sponsor and money-man of pro-Soviet publishing in New York.

Ingersoll became publisher of the Stalinoid newspaper *P.M.* – a classic Münzenberg-style daily. Here too, Otto may well have had his unseen place. Ingersoll was guided through every step of this enterprise, practically every paragraph, by Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett. Hammett regularly interviewed prospective editors in his room at the Plaza Hotel, and in the paper's first months, every word that appeared in *P.M.* had been approved in advance by Hammett or Hellman, either in New York or at Hellman's farm in Westchester County.

P.M. was slated for large circulation, a close American cousin to the Parisian Stalinist daily *Ce Soir,* a paper for which Otto was certainly a covert control, run through Otto's protégé Paul Nizan, and fronted by yet another literary celebrity close to him, the Stalinist poet, novelist, and abject, Louis Aragon.

Did Otto play some similar role at *P.M.*? Was *he* at the Westchester County farm too? It is perfectly possible, even probable, but must rest unproved. Certainly it is true that high-level agents of the apparatus, from Katz to Louis Dolivet, could be found hovering near *P.M.* throughout its existence. Whatever the game, it would have been scrupulously clandestine.

And Claud Cockburn himself? It's frequently been suggested, by Peter Wright among others, that Cockburn may well have been a colleague of Otto Katz in the secret service of the International. By the time the Spanish Civil War rolled round, it is certain that Cockburn was quite consciously fabricating disinformation for Otto.

Well, *was* Cockburn *nash:* "ours?" Maybe and maybe not. Finally, the distinction does not strike me as presenting a very meaningful difference. Cockburn spent his adult life as the most visible and best-connected Stalinist journalist in England. He was the perfect incarnation of a certain glib tone of sneering condescension – the Cockburn tone was Bloomsbury vulgarized – fused with a wholeheartedly Stalinist soul and mind. Guy Burgess talked very much the way Cockburn wrote. In Claud Cockburn, Stalin was in full and public possession of his man.

In the fall of 1933, the Counter-Trial had made its headlines and served its purpose. Anti-fascism was becoming the central issue that the age demanded, and London was following Paris as its capital. But there was more to be done in England than to stage the Counter-Trial.

Among the means used to promote the Stalinist chic was the Left Book Club, in which Katz played a large role. It will be remembered that Münzenberg was one of the inventors of the book club in its modern form – and that a year and a half before he dispatched Otto to Moscow in

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1929, Willi assigned his man to be administrator and agent-in-place at *Universum Bücherei,* his book club in Berlin. The Left Book Club was more or less a cookie-cutter version of *Universum Bücherei.*

The front men, of course, were English: John Strachey, Harold Laski, and Victor Gollancz. Of this trio, Strachey was a witting agent; Victor Gollancz almost certainly so, and Laski a very sophisticated innocent.* With Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the intensely ambitious Strachey became the leading publicist for Stalinist intellectual chic of England and front man for the Anti-War International.

Strachey's biographer says Strachey invariably consulted with Harry Pollitt and "the British communist party" before making his selections for the LBC. No doubt, but Harry Pollitt was a notoriously rough diamond. He knew nothing about the rarified literary and intellectual politics in which the Left Book Club trafficked. The man who really understood these matters was Katz, and from its very first listing the Left Book Club's agenda was a direct reflection of the current concerns of Münzenberg's Paris office, which Katz ran: a book by Rudolf Olden – a longtime Münzenberg collaborator – and a British translation of Malraux's *Days of Contempt,* which had been written to order for Münzenberg with the steady "assistance" of two Otto Katz minions, Manès Sperber and Willi Bredel. Besides this, under a number of pseudonyms ("O.K. Simon") Otto also wrote a number of the club's featured, though long-forgotten, selections.

So Otto was at the least a tutelary spirit for the LBC, and probably more.

The name – Left *Book* Club – misleads a little: Like *Universum Bücherei,* it was much more than British communism's bookshop by mail. It was how Stalinist opinion was "networked" in England. The Club offered Münzenberg's familiar array of camps and conferences and propaganda tours of the USSR, and it organized the usual cadres for directing

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*That John Strachey was a witting member of the Soviet apparatus seems to me plainly demonstrated by his position in the Anti-War International, and Strachey's action (as described by John Lehmann in a letter to Andrew Boyle), at the time of the attempt to recruit Lehmann for work in espionage during the Viennese propaganda campaign of 1934. (See *The Climate of Reason* by Andrew Boyle. London: Coronet (revised edition), 1980, pp.105-106.) But few observers would doubt Strachey's deep involvement at this late date. The case of Gollancz is perhaps more controversial. During the years of the LBC, Gollancz was at the very least a fellow traveller who was very reliably responsive to the needs of the Party, and to Strachey's direction. My guess, based on two recent studies, is that he was more than that (see *Intellectuals* by Paul Johnson. New York: Harper and Row, 1988, and *Victor Gollancz: A Biography* by Ruth Dudley Edwards. London: Gollanca, 1987).

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opinion in every area from the theater and art to sports. Whenever propaganda required, the rabbits of protest would leap from the clandestine cap. There were clubs to celebrate Soviet cinema, Soviet art, Soviet anything – joined to the usual untiring search for intellectual legitimacy. This craving for the prestige of cultural big names amounted to an institutional neurosis for the *apparat*. Nor was the church forgotten: Gibarti was particularly proud of how effectively he dominated the political attitudes of the Right Reverend Hewlett Johnson, Dean of Canterbury Cathedral. (Johnson was never the Archbishop of Canterbury, incidentally, though credulous Continentals often jumped to that conclusion, and Gibarti was delighted to have it so.) Johnson was a genuinely contemptible creature, mindless and cheerful in his Stalinism, a cleric who could be relied upon to rain blessings on any act of cruelty or tyranny that Louis Gibarti told him to bless, while denouncing as un-Christian any challenge or question put to the dictator's power, wherever it might appear.

One bit of Ariadne's thread linking propaganda and espionage can be picked up in the youth of Rosamund Lehmann's brother, the publisher and poet John Lehmann. In 1933 John Lehmann was a promising and glamourously well-connected young man of letters who had just stubbed his toe against the ego of Virginia Woolf. The result was a painful but brief hiatus in what would become one of the most distinguished careers in modern British publishing. John Lehmann came straight down from Cambridge at the turn of the decade, and was introduced to his trade by taking on the slightly dangerous job of assisting Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, to which he had been sent for the interview by his great friend, the Woolfs' nephew and Anthony Blunt's lover, Julian Bell.

Leonard and Virginia were delighted with Lehmann, and he got the job. He served his apprenticeship with such success that by 1932 or so a certain inevitable friction began to emerge. John Lehmann was much more than merely a bright young man. He soon showed a very genuine and specific aptitude for publishing. Leonard and Virginia were able to leave everything in his hands; for the first time in years, a holiday was possible – days, whole weeks of freedom. Lehmann was no mere go-fer. Not only did he have taste and intellect of his own; he was beginning to put the stamp of a new generation on something that had always been absolutely and uniquely theirs.

Despite her quite unfeigned fondness for this golden boy, and she was very taken with him, Virginia especially disliked the new note. A fresh generation of anti-poetic realists was emerging, a generation for whom Virginia Woolf was an institution but not a model. The writers of the

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thirties were assuming their identity: John Lehmann was their man at Hogarth. Virginia watched it all through somewhat narrowed eyes. As the inevitable confrontation drew nearer, things grew rather tense at the Hogarth Press.

At this point, Lehmann decided that the better part of valor was to slip away from Tavistock Square for a while, and join his friends – friends he'd been bringing to Hogarth: Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden – in German-speaking Europe. *The* place to be. Yet though he does not say so in his beautiful memoir *The Whispering Gallery* – he makes only one passing remark about "the swirl of . . . underground . . . anti-war and anti-fascist activities" – John Lehmann did not go to Vienna spontaneously. He was sent.

Who sent him? As things grew sticky at Hogarth, Lehmann had gone for advice to John Strachey. Strachey listened and understood perfectly. He quite agreed: the situation with the Woolfs was becoming strained. Why not take some time away, let things cool down. Visit the Continent. How about Vienna? After all, many of Lehmann's friends – Isherwood, Auden, all sorts of fascinating people – were heading there that summer. And Strachey knew just the way to make the trip worthwhile. Why not travel under the auspices of a splendid radical organization which Strachey ran; surely John had heard of it? The Anti-War International? The Anti-War International was more than merely idealistic. It was in the thick of the *real* anti-fascist fight. And Strachey could tell him, confidentially, that the real anti-fascist fight was about to be in Vienna. Vienna would be *the* place to be this summer. The young man's blood raced a little when Strachey suggested that Lehmann travel to Austria as a "secret correspondent."

And was Vienna the place where the "real" anti-fascist fight took place? Not precisely. Vienna is where the *illusion* of the anti-fascist fight would be played out. It was an illusion created to serve ends very different from the defeat of Adolf Hitler. In 1934, the apparatus selected Vienna as the scene of an important "anti-fascist" campaign mixed with covert action. Gibarti was almost certainly a principal actor in the propaganda effort, while the chief of "underground" action, working on espionage and subversion, was a decidedly murderous operative named Alexander Orlov, who after Vienna moved on to England, where he took over directing the Cambridge group, while after London he moved on to larger things in Spain.

The aim of the Viennese anti-fascist campaign of 1934 was not, at any point, to oppose Adolf Hitler. On the contrary. Its function was to undermine the two leading parties of Austria. One of these was on the far right, the "clerico-fascists." The other, on the left, was a Marxist but non-

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Stalinist Social Democratic party. Both of these parties were detested by Stalin and Hitler alike. And the two dictators' shared motive in Austria was to use the "anti-fascist" campaign to provoke them both into mutual destruction.

In Vienna, the anti-Stalinist Marxists, socialist city-dwellers mainly, were led by Otto Bauer. The arch-conservative countryside of the "clerico-fascists" was led by the Austrian premier, Engelbert Dollfuss. Note well: "clerico-fascist" though he was, Dollfuss was every bit as roundly detested by Hitler as the Marxist Bauer was hated by Stalin. That is the crucial point. Both dictators wanted both parties destroyed. Neither Dollfuss nor Bauer had ever done his act of submission to his respective totalitarian leader, and the aim of the campaign in Austria was simultaneously to serve both the Nazis and the Soviets by destroying them both. They only seemed to take sides with their apparent ideological allies. A year later Dollfuss would be assassinated not by communists but by the Nazis. Stalinist "help" tore Bauer's non-Stalinist party to shreds. A campaign that would destabilize Bauer and Dollfuss was therefore a welcome event in Hitler's eyes, and Stalin's secret service eagerly took on the job. In 1934, Dollfuss had set out to tear down the very real achievements of Bauer's Social Democratic government. At this moment, Stalin saw the opportunity to wreck the hated Social Democrats under the guise of help.

Gibarti and Orlov set out to create a high-visibility "anti-fascist" campaign, mingling propaganda and covert action, sabotaging and discrediting Bauer's non-Stalinists under the appearance of "aid" while generating one of the dominant and most destructive political clichés of the 1930s. This was the notion that the social democratic left, and the democracies in general, were too weak, too ambivalent, too much of a divided mind really to fight Hitler. For that, decent people would have to turn to the hard left, and to Stalin. But they would be brought to this change by an "anti-fascist" campaign that in reality posed no challenge at all to Hitler and was in fact perfectly welcome in his eyes.

This lie about the feebleness of democracy, and the campaign that promoted it, were a great success. By the time the effort was over, the combined brutalities of the *apparat* and the Austrian clerico-fascists left Austria's entire non-Stalinist left dispersed, converted to Stalinism, or in jail. Many of Bauer's naive young supporters ran for their lives to their "friends" in Russia: the Soviets gave them a parade, then sent them to the gulag. Simultaneously, and to the Nazis' delight, Dollfuss was destabilized and discredited as well, and by the end of the year the Nazis had assassinated him. He was replaced by a bewildered, weak, utterly intimidated government of the anti-Nazi right, cowering in an effective squeeze between the two dictators. And when Hitler at last moved into Austria in

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the Anschluss of 1938, Stalin's protests were strictly perfunctory.

All this had required a lot of smoke and mirrors. Bookstore windows groaned with titles on Viennese outrages; the press was drenched in Austria's agony. Naomi Mitchison was dispatched to Vienna by Victor Gollancz, with a "generous" advance to write what became her *Vienna Diary*. Mitchison, an inveterate fellow traveller, was greatly flattered by being made a courier. "I was carrying papers," she proudly wrote, "from socialist friends to their British comrades in my thick woolen knickers." From Stephen Spender and W. H. Auden to Hugh Gaitskell, the fellow travellers were made to converge *en masse*. Strachey was right. Vienna was *the* place to be.

Meanwhile, John Lehmann took up his job as a "secret correspondent," typing up innocent but fervid "anti-fascist" articles. Presently he was approached by a "swarthy" comrade, casually introduced, who insisted upon getting together privately with Lehmann. And what did he want to talk about? Politics. Serious politics.

The chat at this sort of recruitment rendezvous was notable for being at once very probing and distinctly evasive. At last the stranger had a suggestion. Up until now Lehmann had merely been writing articles – wisely suggested by the International – and placing them in various publications back home. Wonderful, brave work. But there was other work to do for anti-fascism. Even more important, more serious work. Special work.

Like?

Well, it dealt with . . . "other political information."

Other information?

Precisely what "other information" remained unclear, but the swarthy visitor was persistent, "refusing to take 'no' for an answer."

"My 'recruiting sergeant' was very pressing, but extremely vague about what he exactly wanted me to do."

Lehmann became uneasy. "I smelt a rat . . . that is, I decided he would finally reveal that he wanted me to become a Soviet agent." At this point, still deep in his "secret correspondent's" innocence and a little scared, Lehmann turned for advice to John Strachey. What passed between Strachey and Lehmann is not recorded. Lehmann releases only the information that their talk "convinced me I was treading on too dangerous ground." After his conversation with Strachey, "the mysterious gentleman" who had been so very persistent "vanished from my life."

Lehmann ends his mini-confession with a sigh: "Of course I see now that I was peculiarly vulnerable, and perhaps lucky to swim past the lobster-pot as easily as I did."

This heir to Bloomsbury has been standing at the precise point of in-

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tersection between propaganda and espionage. Münzenberg's Anti-War International *was* the propaganda branch of the Soviet espionage apparatus. Lehmann had been sent to Vienna as a recruitment test, and in his squeamishness and probably partly false naiveté, he had failed that test. It was an examination that others passed, and passed brilliantly. One successful candidate, for example, was Kim Philby.

But the mingling of propaganda and espionage among the Bloomsbury spies is best illustrated in the relation between Blunt and Burgess. Once exposed, Blunt held a "press conference" over smoked trout in the board room of the London *Times,* during which he claimed to have been led and run for the *apparat* by Guy Burgess. It is true that Burgess seems to have recruited Blunt. And what a very discriminating choice it was. Yet they all worked together, with Philby playing a decisive role and Blunt coolly guiding and tempering Burgess's inveterate enthusiasms and excesses.

Though the entire circle was under the control of the NKVD, it makes some sense to call Burgess the "Münzenberg-man" in the group. His career – his work in broadcasting, his "circle" – forms a classic British reflection of the Münzenberg style. Burgess knew the Münzenberg legals very well, and was often in Paris, showing off in front of Goronwy Rees by invoking the kind of cultural pull only the Paris office could arrange: dinner with Theodore Dreiser, for example, when the apparatus trotted out the author of *An American Tragedy* for yet another culture conference. I've heard it claimed that Burgess was actually presented to Willi. This is perfectly plausible, though I have seen no proof of it, and Babette Gross could not remember.

In effect a "Münzenberg-man," Guy surely knew Otto reasonably well; yet he was also an agent of espionage under control. In the early days, Maly ordered him to pose as a convert to British fascism, working and sleeping with a fascist fellow traveller and Member of Parliament named Captain Jack Macnamara, an obvious assignment in covert work, as was Burgess's war-time work in SOE. That Burgess could be that, *and* simultaneously be so much the Münzenberg-man indicates precisely the interpenetration of propaganda and espionage services which is so often denied. Burgess moved in the worlds of *both* Maly and Gibarti, and simultaneously.

Poor Burgess seems to have been guided at the deepest level by the cruel muse of failure. He is one of the great and instructive human wrecks. Such people are often enough found in secret services. The life of achievement in art and the intellect is not a very forgiving one. What begins as brilliant youth can very easily sink into some awful region between

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the second and third ranks, the anonymous place where so often even the best of the quite good sinks and drifts forever. In 1931, it was generally assumed that Guy would become one of the great academics of his era. Given how Burgess ended – bleary, sentimental, slobbering – it is difficult to grasp how many serious people thought Guy Burgess the youth one of the most brilliant, compelling, promising human beings they had ever met.

In preparing my own book, I have met many agents of influence who worked for various governments within the Münzenberg tradition. More than one has left me with a troubling, nameless afterimage, the sense of some shadow hovering over our talk. I'm tempted to call that lingering shade the ghost of Guy Burgess. Repeatedly, it comes cropping up again: *the same glib charm. The same startling but too-glancing erudition and* intellectual range. The same enthralling capacity for gossip; the same breezy knowing of everybody and everything. Often, the same elegance – though often a failed elegance, grown a tad seedy, a little dirty, or sloppy, or out of date, or somehow off. Often the same sexual gamesmanship – whether heterosexual or homosexual is incidental. Often, a similar river of alcohol flowing nearby. These men (the ones I've met have all been men) who began life dazzling everyone with their promise. Like Guy, they set out with the very grandest connections in the world of politics, the intellect, and the arts. And then –

We might call it the Burgess curse. The same desolation, often accompanied by alcoholism. The same deepening obscurity covered by one lurching move from one doubtful option to another, and the same shabbiness of promises worn down, then worn thin, and at last worn out. They strike one as men whose double lives were born in a fatal disjunction between their great expectations and their true secret selves. For them, failure began virtually at the moment of early success, back when splashy debuts look like achievement. Their failure would be failure felt before it was seen as promise and loss mingled in bafflement.

For many such people, work in the secret world can be wonderfully restorative. It places them in the realm of power; it locates them, albeit secretly, in a network of larger importance, a role like the one which hope once offered. Once again, their hand is on the pulse. Secretly, they can feel it, there again. Except that by that time, the work of ruin is very nearly complete. Those whom the gods have wrecked with promise, they next make spies.

But if Guy Burgess was failure's tragic creature, Blunt was spiritually tied, and absolutely so, to success. He could not, would not, did not fail: ever. His driving demon was not the muse of failure but the wish to be connected to the network of power. Success defined Blunt's life as surely

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as failure defined Guy's. It may well be that the secret of his prolonged shadowy love for Burgess can be located in this odd coupling of shabby ruin with the impeccably achieved.

In a BBC dramatization of the defection made in the 1980s, the screenwriter has Burgess warn Blunt that he is going to run to Russia with Maclean by mailing Blunt a note containing nothing more than some numbers. The numbers are page references to some lines of poetry, a stanza from Robert Browning, a ballad entitled "Waring," about a once-exciting youth turned failure, who finds he can no longer endure being what he has become. As the poem begins, Waring has decided at last to leave London without so much as a goodbye. He is running, and he will run to . . . Russia.

In the film, Blunt gets the note, opens it, and sees the reference. Browning? "Waring?" Perplexed, he takes down his copy of the poems, leafs through the book until he finds the place, then reads, *sotto voce:*

> What's become of Waring
> Since he gave us all the slip,
> Chose land-travel or seafaring,
> Boats and chest or staff and scrip,
> Rather than pace up and down
> Any longer London town?

In a moment, Blunt takes it in. It comes as the shock of recognition, and we see him absorbing it. Guy? "Giving us all the slip?" *Guy is defecting too.* Then, enraged – at once betrayed, bereft, and very much endangered – Blunt flings the book across the room. I've not seen any evidence that this incident really occurred, but it is a brilliant, genuinely moving screenwriter's touch, and *ben trovato.*

At the height of his adventures in London, Guy Burgess lived in two successive flats there. The first, from the thirties, consisted in the top floor of a place in Chester Square. The second, where he lived during the war, was a large, pleasant place leased through Victor Rothschild on Bentinck Street. The two places seem likely to linger in the iconography of espionage as two *maisons de rendezvous.* Both have been vividly described several times, notably by Goronwy Rees and Malcolm Muggeridge. In Bentinck Street especially, the muse of history seems to have decided to play one of her periodic pranks: Outside number 9 Bentinck Street is affixed a blue-and-white plaque indicating that here once lived Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

In Chester Square, Burgess held court, usually in bed like a squalid Louis Quatorze, receiving visitors in rooms filled with the "indescribable

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debris and confusion from the party that had taken place the night before." Beside the bed were piles of books – Burgess seems to have read and reread *Middlemarch* almost continually through his adult life – and many liquor bottles, variously knocked back. Also near at hand was a frying pan brimming with the nauseating slop of a kind of homemade stew which Burgess concocted each weekend as a somewhat less liquid fortification for all the alcohol, and in order not to waste any tiresome time at a stove. "An evening at Guy's flat," writes Goronwy Rees, "was rather like watching a French farce which has been injected with all the elements of political drama. Bedroom doors opened and shut; strange faces appeared and disappeared down the stairs where they passed some new visitor on his way up; civil servants, politicians, visitors to London, friends and colleagues of Guy's popped in and out of bed and then continued some absorbing discussion of political intrigue. . . ."

The Bentinck Street flat was Guy Burgess's home during the war. As the Allies' capital, London was the capital where all the conspirators came to roost. Many roosted, at least now and then, at Bentinck Street. It was a delightful place, very much a step up, even luxurious; testimony to Blunt and Guy Burgess's increasing influence over their good friend Lord Victor Rothschild, who had sublet it to Burgess for a song.

If one could capture who, and what, passed through Bentinck Street during those years it would be possible to reconstruct some grotesque but remarkably full secret history of the Second World War. It would be political Proust belated by a quarter century, the cataclysm of the age as viewed by Jupien. Bentinck Street became a kind of salon, in which Burgess gathered the homosexual underworld of London together with some of the most devious and despicable political operatives then at work. I'm thinking for example of the Baron Wolfgang von und zu Putlitz, along with a distasteful creature from the upper anonymity of French politics named Edouard Pfeiffer. All this was crowned by the Bloomsbury elite.

Malcolm Muggeridge describes a visit there even more memorably than does Rees. Muggeridge was a middle-class boy. In this passage one can hear his own bitter, anomalous protest against Bloomsbury and its snobbery:

> There we found another gathering of displaced intellectuals, but more prosperous, more socially secure than the *Horizon* ones – John Strachey, J. D. Bernal, Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess, a whole revolutionary *Who's Who*. It was the only time I ever met Burgess, and he gave me the feeling, such as I have never had from anyone else, of being morally afflicted in some way. His very physical

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> presence was, to me, malodorous and sinister; as though he had some consuming illness – like the galloping consumption. . . . The impression fitted in well enough with his subsequent adventures; as did this millionaire's nest altogether, so well set up, providing, among other amenities, special rubber bones to bite on if the stress of the Blitz became too much to bear. Sheltering so distinguished a company – Cabinet Minister-to-be [John Strachey], honored Guru of the extreme left-to-be [J. D. Bernal], Connoisseur Extraordinary-to-be [Blunt], and other notabilities, all in a sense grouped around Burgess; Etonian mudlark and sick toast of a sick society.

One of the Bloomsbury grandees well known to Burgess was Harold Nicolson. Nicolson met Guy Burgess in the early thirties, and Nicolson's biographer cites Burgess as one of the young men who held some grip on the feelings of Nicolson all through this period. Whether they were lovers is unclear and doubtful, but they obviously became close friends. It is clear that Burgess used his friendship with Nicolson as part of his rise. It was through Nicolson's influence that Burgess joined the staff of the BBC in 1936; in fact, much of Burgess's rise through the British establishment took place under Nicolson's sponsorship. Nicolson shared none of Guy's political values; the bond was not political in the large sense, but in the more narrow Bloomsbury sense, and it was bound to the old code of Bloomsbury assumptions.

Burgess was guided into broadcasting, obviously, by his "friends" in the *apparat,* but only after a year or two posing as fascist fellow traveller, working in the office and bed of Captain Jack. Simultaneously Burgess took a job directing public relations for a Nazi fellow-travelling front, the Anglo-German Fellowship, a group Philby was likewise ordered to join. Both men were active members for two years, spouting the line. That this fact alone did not automatically disqualify them for any place whatever in war-time British intelligence has never been explained. Indeed it is overlooked in almost all the discussions of their rise, yet short of a brass band, it is difficult to know how a gross risk to British security could have been more blatant. Membership in the Fellowship forthrightly proclaimed Nazi association. No matter. Both men were shoehorned into the most sensitive areas of the British services by their untiring admirer within the services, a major figure in the history of British intelligence, Guy Liddell.

Guy Liddell is one of the enduringly mysterious figures in the history of secret service intrigue. He was from the mid-1920s until he left the service in the mid-1950s probably the most important single figure in either the British or American services to address himself primarily to the question of covert Soviet activity in England and outside Russia. Virtually everything known by the American State Department about the *apparat*

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prior to the founding of the OSS had its origins in memoranda forwarded from London and Liddell. He was one of the most beloved and entirely trusted figures in the British services. For years, the slightest hint of compromise attributed to Liddell's name awakened the flashing ire of committed emeritus members of the service: the late Sir Dick White, for example.

Yet it is also true that virtually every significant advance in the British secret services made by members of the Cambridge group was made under the patronage of Liddell. His assisting hand can be found in every significant move they made. Liddell has repeatedly been proposed as a possible mole within the services: this charge has repeatedly been turned aside. The most significant such accusation comes from Burgess and Blunt's college friend Goronwy Rees, who was himself recruited into the apparatus around this time and broke with it at some uncertain date: possibly the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Rees considered Blunt's entire career both before and after exposure to have moved under Liddell's collaborating protection.

The question of Liddell will only be answered in the archives, and I predict his mystery will prove even more persistent than that of the Hiss case. While we wait for the necessary research to be undertaken and completed, the case against Liddell must rest as eloquently made and then doubted again by Mr. John Costello. I have little to add, except to say that I regard the circumstantial evidence against Liddell and in favor of Rees's accusations to be so massive and so compromising that, once it is known, it becomes almost impossible to return to viewing Liddell in the simple light of simple innocence. More investigation is needed. But as one shrewd observer put it to me: "If Guy Liddell was *not* a Soviet agent, he was just wasting his time."

On the very long list of compromising truths known about Liddell is that he was a regular habitué of Burgess's salon on Bentinck Street. Bentinck Street was a place that a shrewd child could spot as packed to the walls with security risks. How a senior official in British counter-intelligence would have chosen it of all places to let his hair down beggars inquiry. Liddell was also directly responsible for placing both Kim Philby and Guy Burgess into their first jobs in the British intelligence services. This took place shortly after both men had left membership in and service to a well-known Nazi front, many of whose members were by war-time directly chargeable with treason. To be sure, by 1936 Philby and Burgess had dropped their fascist pose. What of it? The gross security risk remained, staring out. Either Liddell didn't know about their old commitment. In which case he was failing in his job. Or he knew they had been posing. In which case he knew they had been Soviet agents. Or he knew

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the truth and thought it didn't matter. In which case he was an idiot and an incompetent. And nobody thinks Liddell was that.

Harold Nicolson, on the other hand, was a major broadcaster, a power in the BBC: during the war he became the BBC's political head, with full access to Churchill, as well as parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Information, which ran the secret services. And of course he was a legendary personage in the Bloomsbury group, husband of Virginia Woolf's lover Vita Sackville-West, and a very notable diarist, diplomat, and arbiter of taste.

Nicolson's numerous published diary entries on Burgess are anything but complete or candid. After 1952, Nicolson plainly did his best to cover this ill-favored and credulous union with the spy. The full story in its emotional and political dimensions has never been seriously explored, though an exceptionally meticulous historian of broadcasting, Mr. W. J. West, has studied its consequences for the BBC.

Under Nicolson's patronage, Burgess advanced spectacularly through the Bloomsbury networks; he was soon the most influential political producer in the entire BBC, where he introduced Soviet propagandists and fellow travellers wholesale. These naturally included Anthony Blunt, whose many appearances at the BBC were most useful in his rise. For Blunt's kind of ambition, the scholarly reputation needed the added luster of a little popular chic.

Meanwhile, Burgess exploited his role at the BBC with subtlety and dexterity. But there was more to it than that. As Nicolson's biographer laconically notes, "there can be little doubt that Guy Burgess extracted from Harold inside information which he passed on to his masters in Moscow."

When Guy Burgess defected, Nicolson as usual wrote in his diary, and what he wrote is revealing. The entry is filled with anguish. "If I thought Guy a brave man, I should have thought he had gone over to join the communists. As I know him to be a coward" – one wonders how Nicolson knows this, exactly – "I suppose that he was suspect of passing things to the Bolshies and realizing his guilt, did a bunk."

There is something a little repellent in this notation. Anguish – yes. But one also is struck by the schoolboy tone; by the weak-minded, evasive thought about "courage" made in a remark that reveals ignorance of both Burgess's actual courage and his actual communism; by the unidiomatic use of the word "realizing" and finally by the kid's talk about "passing things to the Bolshies," and "doing a bunk." Here was an "Apostle," the very incarnation of Lytton Strachey's ideal, who had spent a friendship with one of the foremost of the Bloomsbury group lying to him in every meeting and using him at every opportunity not for mere

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crude personal gain – heaven forbid! – but in the service of tyranny. Nicolson had been jerked around and kissed up to and deceived not to make a few pounds or pull off admission to some club. Burgess had stooped to all this in order to betray his country and to serve the enslavement of nations. Speaking of it, Nicolson forgets that he was something more than a friend with Guy Burgess. He was a minister in Winston Churchill's cabinet, a man upon whom the fate of whole peoples, strangers to him, to some measurable degree depended. He seems incapable of addressing any of this. He cannot face a scrap of it; he would not even really face it in the years to come. In his correspondence to Moscow, Nicolson continued to treat Burgess as if he were merely an exceptionally errant friend with whom he happened to disagree. He never could see that this "friend" had used him, his position, his confidence, that unmentionable thing called his political power *and* his political trust to betray his friend *and* his country, along with a number of other countries – most wretched of all – into the bargain. It was all E. M. Forster in reverse, but with a relentless vengeance. Rather than acknowledge such a thing, Nicolson's voice reverts to childish babble. "Did a bunk"? He speaks as if Burgess were a ten-year-old classmate caught cheating at some game, albeit a game on the playing fields of Eton. It makes a nightmarish final twist in Lytton Strachey's malicious, power-driven, angry cult of "friendship."

Yet it would be very wrong to end on a note of mere condemnation of this used and deluded man. Nicolson's diary entry ends on a note of great personal pain. He *is* in agony; he *is* ashamed. "During my dreams," Nicolson concludes, "his absurd face stares at me with drunken unseeing eyes."

Some rough beast, born in Bloomsbury, had slouched all the way home.

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NORMAN MANEA

Writers and the Great Beast

As it rushes to an end, this century, more than any other, could be called the century of the intellectuals. When its beginning and end are compared, whether on a mundane or a fundamental level, pivotal developments are immediately obvious: the mind's achievements in science and technology, the deep schism in art, and the radical upheaval that has shaken the individual and society.

Spectacular accomplishments and extreme dangers have accompanied the dramatic worldwide expansion of uncertainty in this new era. The year 2000 approaches replete with all the manmade means of planetary catastrophe. Although the macabre play of man's imagination has anticipated this catastrophe, his conscience is inclined to relegate it to an uncomfortable side road.

The fear at the threshold of this new millennium differs from its tenth-century counterpart in which an end-of-the-world psychosis was linked to the gods and fate. In a desacralized world, as Heisenberg said, "man stands on this earth only in relation to himself." It seems as if mankind is being herded onto an enormous ship, or more exactly, into a large metal hull with a compass that does not point north but towards the mass of the ship itself. . . . And the genetic revolution could well result in a horrible apotheosis through its creative artifices and manipulations.

Given the widespread crises jeopardizing our transition to a completely different world, the "crisis of the ideal" is no longer a problem simply for intellectuals – whom dictionaries usually define as more interested in thinking and understanding than in feeling or acting. It is a problem for us all. Moreover, this crisis is not merely a question of overpopulation and the arms race, of under- and overdevelopment, of fanaticism, environmental destruction and the arrogance of power, but of the deep imbalance in human existence that unleashes all of those. When he suggested that the banality and chaotic absurdity of daily existence cannot be overcome without a transcendent goal, Einstein was referring to the centripetal force of the idea. The collapse of the totalitarian communist system and the threat of new forms of totalitarianism – whether of a religious nature (incited by Islamic fundamentalism, for example) or a nationalist one – again raise the question of transcendent "ideals" with heightened urgency. Without such ideals, man falls prey to emptiness or

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self-destructiveness. And yet, he apparently does not know how to defend himself effectively against the cynical and catastrophic manipulations of these ideals. This is not only a question for philosophers, who were once called the functionaries of mankind; it is also a question for every conscious inhabitant of the present in which the past parodies its tragedies as farces.

When Marx called us to take leave of the past with a laugh, he surely did not suspect what "real socialism" would look like, nor that its citizens would come to feverishly desire its complete destruction. The world's first socialist state – which was to be the Soviet Union and not Germany, as many socialists believed at the beginning of the century – dissolved before the new millennium could herald its surprises. Foolish history once again aimed its sarcasm at the dreams of perfection and the rationalized schemata of its imperfect guinea pigs. The abandonment of socialism was not brought about by a "leap forward" into communism, where laughter would probably have been rationed and collectivized; rather, it occurred as a "regression" to capitalism, which Marx himself had analyzed and chastised with unparalleled acuity.

The euphoria of this abandonment followed hard on the heels of a punishing transition. Perhaps abandoning socialism requires a painful step back before it can promise two steps forward. The transition, with its misery, confusion, and humiliation, has provoked pity rather than laughter. But above all it has inspired well-founded concern – as much in those who must endure the hardship of the transition as in outside observers. After the utopia, the masquerade, and the terror of totalitarianism, a post-communist kitsch has sardonically perfected the tragicomedy of our tormented century. Whether they are artists, scientists, or even farmers, intellectuals are confronting the parody that predestined them to be heroes, aware of their roles in the farce.

Poverty. Profiteering. Demagogy. Diversionary tactics. Rebirth. Renewal. Hope. The burden of the past: mistrust, guilt, vengefulness. The confusion of the present: new hierarchies and new truths, and with them, the uncertainty of the future. The isolation and instability of freedom threaten the ease which succeeded the routine of subjection, a routine which also brought the comfort of fatalistic apathy. Freedom is what each of is able to realize out of our fleeting assumptions. Supporters of democracy are more often motivated by the prospect of wealth than by the complicated rules of respecting individuality or fostering pluralism. Now, an astonishing number of "heroes" have already replaced an enormous number of opportunists under the dictatorship. Former activists or political functionaries, now unscrupulous businessmen, hold in contempt their old comrades who insist on dreaming of restoration. Former dissidents have

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blossomed into shrewd politicians or remain relicts of a reverse Stalinism. Impassioned politicians creep off into introspection and silence; timid loners are promoted as the champions of the hour. Impromptu liberals are confronted with old and new conservatives, extremists, idealists, ideologues. Old and new profiteers, the formerly and the newly naive stir up the great and by no means innocent masses, who in turn regenerate their own adaptation instincts.

Those who for years were forced to suffer through tedious lessons in Marxism and political economics discover that capitalism, not socialism, teaches that "existence determines consciousness" and that the workers of the world never did unite, precisely because they were interested only in their own material lives, which differed so greatly from one country to the next. Should we still be surprised by the recent threats of extremism under different banners or by the potential explosiveness of discontent that could pave the way for new forms of dictatorship? After the failed experiment in "abolishing man's exploitation of man," its survivors will be subjected to another painful experiment: the transition from state ownership of evil to individual ownership of good and evil.

However fantastic its stagings may often have seemed, totalitarian society was not an unearthly or demonic deviation, as many believe, but a human reality. The pulse of totalitarianism beats in man (and can be detected in the family, in schools, at work, and so on); otherwise, it could not have (and cannot) become an ideology and a system of government. Totalitarian "social engineering" grew out of dissatisfaction with and criticism of democracy's imperfections and adapted itself to a transcendent ideal. We should keep in mind that Hitler came to power in Germany through free elections in a time of acute industrial and political crises; that the Russian Revolution of October 1917 did not erupt in the most gruesome period of tsarism, but under Kerensky's brief democratic government. As Lenin said, every revolution needs five minutes of freedom.

The fact that the first free elections in Algeria in 1992 gave fuel to the fundamentalists reminds us that the Ayatollah Khomeini first came to power when the shah began to "liberalize" his rule. Are we allowed to see Nazism as a trivialized and diseased "Romanticism"? Or only as racist nihilism that led to the Holocaust? Should we consider communism a demagogic "humanism"? Or only a simplistic rationalism that is subservient to tyranny, culminating in the gulag? When Stalin called writers the "engineers of the human soul," he styled, condensed, and revealed an entire pedagogy of terror, justifying its horror with a utopian vision.

It is no coincidence that intellectuals have experienced with particular intensity the contradiction between the "ideal" and the critical intelligence that reveals the ideal's weaknesses. While many intellectuals from the East can be reproached with opportunism (one hardly needs an espe-

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cially keen eye to recognize the perverted ideal in profane socialist reality), many intellectuals from the West served simultaneously as their accomplices in the free world by preserving, in a corrupt fashion, an already compromised communist ideal. They transferred their dissatisfaction with the imperfections of the democracy in which they lived and whose privileges they enjoyed to a specious ideal. Yet it would be as false once again to hold intellectuals entirely responsible for the "totalitarian compromise," as it would be to credit them with all anti-totalitarian heroism. There were enough blue-collar, as well as more or less influential white-collar workers in the East and in the West, who played the same double-dealing game. Some situations must be judged within their historical contexts, for only thus do they gain the complexity and clarity that justifies analysis. Those rushing to condemn or glorify today, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, should be reminded that for the totalitarian regime, an intellectual was, at best, a fellow traveller, and for democratic society he remains an odd, marginal figure.

Lorca and Mandelstam symbolize the martyrdom of thousands of artists and intellectuals. This does not excuse those who collaborated with power out of naivete, fear, or greed. And many did – from all social strata. The totalitarian system sadistically manipulated basic preconditions of humanity and relied on the apathy, confusion, egoism, and enslavement of the masses. For intellectuals, the pitfalls of intimidation, temptation, and remuneration were also constructed upon basic human preconditions. It is hardly surprising that nonetheless intellectuals stood up before those who opposed tyranny either in secret or in open confrontation. They simply followed their vocation. Freedom is in fact the main precondition for intellectual works in which the ideal and critical intelligence reinforce each other. They are ultimately inseparable.

Politics is obsessed with power. Creativity is synonymous with freedom. The totalitarian state represents absolute power; under a totalitarian system, art is not only a provocation, as it is for any form of authority; it is, purely and simply, the *enemy*. Remaining honest and maintaining one's moral and artistic integrity, under continual surveillance and censorship, under the pressure of constant risk and growing taboos, requires a silent, lonely heroism. There were many clear instances of defiant courage, however: artists and scientists rebelled against the terror, boldly opposed the opportunism of their surroundings, and overcame their own mistrust of rhetoric by explicitly opposing tyranny.

In a political system that considers culture one of its greatest weapons and honors its artists with astonishing privileges and punishments, the writer is beset with traps, intended in the long run to compromise and destroy his identity. So he learns to protect himself even from the pitfalls

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of his own thought. While "bourgeois" governments had received them with relative indifference, in the first years of the so-called "people's regime," many intellectuals were surprised and flattered with unexpected attention, and many fell victim to their seduced vanity. Only after a long time and much bitter experience did they realize that the respect they had been granted represented merely another form of surveillance and that their privileges were the cost of their complicity. The nightmarish first decade after the war, with its militant Stalinist motto, "With us or against us" (which potential prisoners translated as "Everyone who is not with us is against us – and so will be destroyed"), has been engraved, to prolonged and inhibiting effect, on people's memory in the East. The number of those in league with power was not small. The natural instinct of self-preservation also functioned in borderline cases – especially in borderline cases. When Kadar's slogan was recast in the 1980s as "Everyone who is not against us is with us," the entire metabolism of survival had changed. Yet the essence of totalitarian pedagogy remained just as false. "Real socialism" was, in the end, an endless education in deceit.

The extensive pathology of the system, expanded and refined over four decades, both supported and gradually undermined it. The unfathomable extent of the system's structural decay became apparent only after the edifice collapsed, exposing the rubble behind its façade of jargon and freeing the prisoners held captive by its duplicity. The chronic deformation of existence requires a meticulous diagnosis. If those who observed this process firsthand have truly seen through it, how it insinuates itself within one and takes root, they should be the first to reject the cheap, shabby rhetoric of oversimplified verdicts with which totalitarianism has indoctrinated its subordinates and often its opponents. Yet as Nietzsche said, those who look too long into the abyss are themselves invaded by it.

Unfortunately, polarities often prove complementary. Intellectuals know this as well, if not better than, anyone. Many anti-fascists were communists, and not a few opponents of totalitarianism (fascists, communists, or religious fundamentalists) are conscious or unconscious pioneers of another form of despotism. It would be tragic if the collapse of "real socialism" were to inflame fanaticism of an opposite extreme and reinforce the proponents of an antiquated conservatism or even kindle an outbreak of religious, nationalist, or social extremism.

The liberal spirit of democracy, discussed today in an atmosphere of growing conservatism as if one were discussing the *dernier cri*, is not merely opposed to totalitarianism but is completely foreign to it, beyond any polarities. Many can justify from personal experience their fierce skepticism of contemporary political kitsch and their distrust of its many forms of manipulation – even now that the so-called communist mask has

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fallen from the tired, disfigured faces of millions of captives in the East. The narcissistic celebration of the free-market, consumer society on the other shore, which now claims divine legitimation as well as victory, does not lack in unintended irony.

With the Holocaust, totalitarianism, and exile, our century has extended the limits of the experience of *educational formation through deformation*. For a boy in love with books, such as myself, the difficult years of Stalinism brought not only a mind-numbing avalanche of shoddy, substandard "socialist realist" tracts, but also the discovery of the great Russian classics, which had been translated as part of the ideological program to cement the friendship "with our great neighbor to the east." As is all great literature, it was a superb schooling in the transcendent and the critical spirit that examines such ideals. Yet it was also a therapeutic schooling in beauty, goodness, and truth, and in their subversive force, which those in power could not begin to understand. Indispensable for prolonged inner exile, my education surely led also, in the end, to actual exile. The long, harrowing years as an engineer, during which I had hoped to evade more easily the pressure of indoctrination, were only the first stage of this unfinished adventure in alienation, in foreignness. I had many opportunities in adolescence and in later years – and still have today – to reflect on the process of *formation through deformation,* on the conflict between the individual's struggle toward openness and infinity and the oppressive, restrictive pressure of the Great Beast, as Simone Weil called society.

The repressive function of restricting and reducing individuality in a totalitarian regime equates not only with prison – the regime's symbol and quintessence – but also with its countless intrigues, ruses, and tricks of control, by spreading distrust and denunciation through the fear of one's neighbors, colleagues, or family – that hysterical mixture of complicity, guilty conscience, and disgust through which tyranny functions without functioning. A worldwide dungeon, divided up into numerous private and state cages watched over by both the penal colony's inmates and its guards. A fierce, progressive poisoning of the social conflicts which relatively open systems meet with pragmatic strategies and democratic compromise. I began publishing during the period of so-called "liberalization," when the dogmatists were searching for alibis, but the Party still demanded a steadfast "engagement" from its artists. "Pressing Love," my first story published in an avant-garde journal in 1966, tried to oppose the prevailing canon precisely through its lack of political content. This timid, erotic story sought to reestablish a natural subject and a normal language. Little wonder then, that the official literary press immediately tore the story to shreds and that the journal in which it ap-

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peared was suspended a few issues later. It is no less significant that when my novel, *The Black Envelope,* my last book published in Romania – a description of the everyday hell of the Ceausescu regime – appeared in 1986, it was mutilated beyond recognition by the censor's interventions, at a time when writers interested in "aesthetic" rather than political questions were given preference.

"Censorship is the mother of metaphor," wrote Borges. One of the communist censor's most perplexing taboos was the Holocaust. I was, out of personal experience, obsessed with this topic. Skeptical of melodramatic public displays of suffering, mortified at the ease with which the Holocaust is trivialized through the cheap marketing of extreme suffering in other parts of the world, and outraged by the hypocrisy, dishonesty, and cynicism with which it was made suspect, manipulated, and avoided in my own country, I have always been interested in the artistic potential of this topic – a topic that ought to have caused an overpowering, traumatic, and crippling silence. Horror refuses to aestheticize, drastically restricting creative freedom. The greater the difficulties, the more I felt they deserved to be mastered. Faced with painful and dangerous consequences, encoding this tragic subject seemed both unavoidable and one way to "protect" it from the grip of manipulation. My story, "Weddings," sought to transfigure just this dilemma. I thought the image of a boy who, having returned from a concentration camp, was trained to give an anti-fascist speech at assemblies and at family celebrations like weddings, birthdays, and christenings, summed up not only the situation of a persecuted minority, but also the general state of postwar Eastern Europe: the perversion of truth in the realm of the official lie and in the herdlike world of private life.

The illusion that censorship inspires creativity, as is sometimes claimed in the West and as many writers and readers in the East resignedly believe, is at best frivolous sophistry. When describing firsthand experiences of reality, erotic life, religious feeling, and especially concrete political problems, Aesopian language works only seldom to aesthetic advantage and almost always results in a lack of honesty. Truth seeks to preserve itself in obscurity and ingenious artifice and survives only in fragments, in ambiguous, often cryptic forms. Readers in Eastern Europe looked to literature for what they could not find in the newspaper or in history and sociology textbooks. They chased truth between the lines, while the author accepted the distortion of his artistic work as the necessary price of solidarity with his audience.

In those difficult times, culture stimulated underground life and exerted a counterforce to state power by restoring trust in creativity, ideas, beauty, and intellectual dialogue, at a time when actual dialogue was

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strangled and corrupted. But culture did not destroy the totalitarian system; the system collapsed under its own weight because of the lack of breathing space and freedom, and because of catastrophic economic bankruptcy. Today, art's balance sheet is disheartening. Mountains of discarded texts are the era's sad remains. The entire epoch's devaluation includes the books it gave birth to, and not only those that served the system but also many that sought to resist it or appeased its arrogance in order to avoid being completely devoured.

I can picture everyone's social apprenticeship as the adventures of an "August the Fool," stumbling from one false trophy to another – and all the more so for the artists, those ambitious creators of chimeras. And yet, the totalitarian experience remains unique because it reflects in an extreme situation not only the sinister potential of the mundane, but also the social pathology totalitarianism cultivated in such absurd contortions. This was not a monolithic society, as communists hoped and many anticommunists claimed. Instead, it distinguished itself through equivocation, deception, ceaseless hypocrisy, and mystification. Only the Chief Buffoon and his retinue of animal trainers still believed, in the last years of the circus, in the absolute magic of terror and the hynotic power of empty promises. If the tragedy of totalitarianism is unforgettable, its grotesque comedy also cannot be forgotten. Like so many extremes throughout history, they are inseparable. In this context of society's dead ends, the place of the artist – an extreme protagonist in extreme circumstances – acquires great importance.

The honest survivor cannot indulge in frivolous illusions or exaggerated lamentations about the fate of mankind. Paradoxically, the writer who has had to defend his integrity (with that ambitious and vulnerable mix of ethics and aesthetics I once called *estetica* in a Romanian pun for "East-ethics") understands that the game of art will always defy but can never tame the Great Beast. This applies even more to exiles, outsiders of all systems, if not of the whole world. A writer who has undergone the most extreme experiences does not consider Flaubert's vision of himself as a *saltimbanque* extravagant. Parodic fiction's ironic revenge against the Great Beast, despite its limitations, does not necessarily exclude greatness.

More than ever, we desperately need a "transcendent ideal" in our centrifugal, materialistic, artificial world, from which the concept of the ideal seems to have been banished – a world in which atomic, ecological, and demographic dangers exacerbate a general sense of panic and confusion. On the other hand, in the disastrous aftermath of totalitarian systems of all persuasions, a clearsighted approach to the manipulations unleashed by every ideal is all the more essential.

We cannot afford to neglect any element of this dilemma – especially

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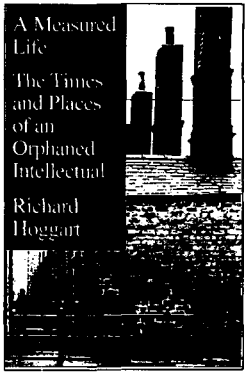
today, when it is heightened by the global crisis of a mass-produced and entangled world. The isolation caused by the daily routine's "horrible brutality" and "hopeless banality" is no longer a strictly intellectual stance but a societal condition. Einstein, called a "logical empiricist artist" by one of his students, claimed that man "in his search for harmony" creates scientific and artistic works with which to balance the stifling limitations of daily life. This consolation apparently remains hidden deep within our crisis. Overwhelmed by "the strange adventure of being human," the Romanian author M. Blecher (1909-1938), a soulmate of Franz Kafka and Bruno Schulz, wrote more than fifty years ago: "I pray to be awakened to another life, to my true life. It is certainly broad daylight; I know exactly where I am and that I am alive. And yet, something is missing." Today millions of people would probably echo these thoughts. As "functionaries of mankind," intellectuals are reclaiming Blecher's words as a reminder of the extreme experiences with which they have identified themselves in this incomparable, ruined century and as a motto in which their growing uncertainty and future responsibility is rooted.

Translated from the German by Tess Lewis



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NORMAN MANEA

Pressing Love

In the rooms I passed through, a narrow border divided the parquetry from another flooring of thin glass. Lately, it often seemed I was walking a fine line, having already suffered everything from enthusiasm to hopelessness, rebelliousness to indifference.

Reborn, I waited in a state of tense inner panic – a delayed reaction – afraid of taking a false step. Such a step, caused perhaps by my very apprehension, would slip me imperceptibly onto the much-too-thin glass floor. There, fear would suddenly and quite naturally turn into complete paralysis, and my heart would stop beating.

Another patient, at another time, but still, now, always, I don't know any more – all false trophies, brief, deceptive victories over reality. Between white walls I woke exhausted by useless, encouraging detours. Suddenly it seemed the walls themselves had expelled me and I slid on patches of fragile glass. Still I believed I had been spared, then forgot, but this too was only an apparent victory.

The glass had grown even thinner. I was so obsessed with the need to feel secure that I believed even my breath could shatter it, and I would fall bleeding into the abyss from which it could not protect me.

The glass floor seemed to stretch through all the rooms surrounding those I used most often, that is, the rooms in which I worked, met friends, ate, or rested. Glass in the entryway, in the elevator, up the staircase, for example, and on the balcony. I felt that no matter how careful I was, how hard I tried not to stumble, my precautions were useless. For even if I did misstep, however much caution and fear restrained my movements, the consequences would not have been as disastrous as if, inevitably, some passerby bumped into me in his haste or carelessness, and unintentionally and unavoidably shoved me onto the fragile sheet of glass.

The glass floor in the nearly empty post office shone coolly, sheltered from the oppressive summer heat.

Watching me intently, her large green eyes drew near. I did not know what I could say, much less what I should do. I needed friendly silence, not the exhaustion of arguing, the feeling of suffocation, of having swallowed too much water. Actually, it was just uncontrolled feelings. I had to close my eyes. I could not help succumbing, just to

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escape this feeling. Like a meteor hitting water, I am engulfed after a large explosion. I can lift my head, and, freed, shake off my timidity. She stands there, looking at me. I will speak.

"It seems as if you've been waiting for me."

"And just how is it you know me?"

"Are you busy this evening?"

"No. What do you suggest, your place?"

I close my eyes again and am completely submerged. When I raise my head, I will be quiet, calm.

"You're pretty. Men probably don't leave you alone."

"I'm not pretty and men still don't leave me alone. Surely you can come up with something more original."

"I doubt I could. I'll wait for you at eight. At the phone booth in front of the theater."

"So, wait then."

There was nothing left to say. I could mumble something in another language or mutter as if I were automatically reciting the lesson from a previous class in some common subject that had lost any significance long before, and in which I had lost interest.

"So tell me, before the bus comes, why you're so bored."

"You are too. It could be a cause for tact."

"Yes, I guess it could."

At eight, I waited by the phone booth. In front of the large glass door, in front of her deeply cut, revealing black blouse. Her white skirt was strewn with large red flowers.

"Where should we go?"

"To the end of the world."

"Hm . . . Is it far?"

"Two stops."

I would not admit it, but I wanted to gather all the armor and arrogant defenses of my daily dissatisfactions into a single, explosive dissatisfaction that would finally catapult me beyond myself. Perhaps these small dissatisfactions had to be brought into contact with great pleasure before they could become large and explosive. Satisfaction, dissatisfaction, the need for them. I was afraid to open myself up, unprepared, to such an experience.

Each street corner signals a possible retreat, or at least a brief pause. Even the slightest hesitation threatened my ability to resist despair.

We climb the stairs. Her heels clatter decisively, too decisively, on the glass and I do not turn on the light. It is always too timid or too bold a gesture and spoils everything. More than anything I dread the moral and rhetorical effect I would then have to reckon with, and I keep silent. I look out the window absent-mindedly and beat an imaginary rhythm in

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the shadow of her breasts.

"Please turn on the light."

"What for?"

"Turn it on. I can't stand the dark."

I press the switch; light; as if I were back in the phone booth.

"Sit here."

"You don't offer guests the bed. I'll stay here, on the chair."

I have to cover the distance from the phone booth to the first corner once again. There is a display window with colorful toys on that corner – a refuge. I will keep standing. She has soft, tender lips, but she turns away, irritated at each attempt until, apparently bored, she relents. I pass the corner, not knowing if I can increase my pace. Long, thin fingers, her sharp nails stop me. Suddenly she relaxes, stands up, takes a few steps towards me. Her stiletto heels hammer out a relentless, indecipherable Morse code on the fragile glass of which I am so afraid. And yet, I have succeeded. She lies absently, stretched out on the bed. Her zipper announces the rustle of silk, sliding, opening.

"What on earth are you doing? Please, be reasonable. You're crushing my things."

I don't answer, busy, feverish.

"Hey, what've you done? This is ridiculous; I'm leaving. I've got tickets for the nine o'clock show. No, please!"

The same vague, nebulous fading of boundaries. Still, I feel as if I had made it across the gleaming stretch of glass to the solid checkerboard parquet. A soothing, silken glow in the darkness. It seemed to keep watch, to guard the lulls, the loneliness as the night flows between us, far away.

Still cool, she lies next to me. Her movements seem automatized. We fall asleep quickly, exhausted and, confused, we discover each other again at dawn, together. I don't know how best to leave.

"It's easy to get to the bathroom, you just have to cross the courtyard."

"I'm not going to work today. I'm tired. Please bring me an iron for my dress."

"I'll get one. Why are you so bored?"

"I've only learned to speak in formulas. And yet, each time, I hope I'll forget."

"You're a cynic."

"No. That's enough. If you want, I can go."

"I've brought you the iron. What are your plans?"

"I'm going to lie down. I'm sleepy."

"Fine. I have to leave. I'll lock the apartment from outside. I'll be back around ten, to let you out."

I pass the building supervisor quickly. I am late. Around ten I come

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back. She is awake. The dress hangs, ironed, over the chair. The bed is made perfectly, geometrically. She is looking out the window.

"I've been waiting for you to let me out so that I could take a bath. Now wait a bit."

I put the books back on the shelves, unplug the iron and lay it on the windowsill. I take a handkerchief from the closet. She comes back, fresh, cold, hostile. A dissatisfied, contemptuous look. I suppose I have no sense of moderation. I approach the rectangle of parquet with too much confidence; I slide on the thin glass too shyly and fearfully.

Behind me she is probably looking out the window or at the iron, now cold and useless.

"Are you still angry?"

"No, I'm not. Let's go."

"I guess you regret having met me."

"Not at all. You're sweet."

I close the window, the door. Her heels kiss the glass and I can feel it eat into me, the fear. I hurry onto the street. No one is following me.

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

I turn left. She stops for a moment, probably the only time she truly hesitated. She catches up to me, panting.

"Please, I've forgotten something. A fan. It was a gift."

"You didn't have a fan."

"Yes I did. Just give me your keys for a second and wait for me."

"But I didn't see a fan."

"I had a fan. What are you . . . I'll be right back."

"OK. I'll wait."

Her heels hastily puncture the glass. I hear them return, heavy, hostile, piercing the fragile layer of glass; I see the transparent surface for only a second.

"Now I can really go. I've settled everything, Sir, and haven't forgotten anything else. Goodbye!"

She looks at me for a long time, avenged. Her beautiful green poisonous look now even seems to hold a kind of tenderness. Yes, tact, as she called it.

I'm back at work in good time. My colleagues reassure me that my absence was not noticed.

Someone tells me the boss wants to see me.

"How many others have been called in?"

"Eight I guess, yeah, eight."

I finish at five o'clock and cannot resist the invitation from a group headed for the beach. We throw ourselves energetically into the water, dive, slip under the surface, thirsting to be refreshed. It all seems to restore

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me. I feel empty, distant. My constantly monitored despair seems to have been healed and has disappeared.

I return home in the evening. I am tired and make a detour to savor my body's heaviness, its lethargy.

In the market square I stop at a kiosk for some juice.

"Papa Traian, give me something cold!"

"Of course, Sir. With this incredible heat . . . a great tragedy, that fire."

"Yes, it's hot. It's roasting out here."

"Today of all days, on St. Ilie day . . . A tragedy, everything is burnt, Sir, it's all destroyed. You seem . . ."

"Yeah, Papa Traian, I'm pretty tired. It sure is hot."

He looks at me timidly, fearful, almost astonished.

"Goodbye, Sir."

I go on slowly, making my way leisurely to the street corner, slowing my steps, my thoughts, my fatigue. In the kiosk, the vendor's movements seemed filled with fear of the heat. Of course, in the dreadful, smoldering apocalyptic heat of a day like today, an iron, left plugged in and forgotten, could easily set a house on fire, burning it to the ground.

A few steps melt into the ground, the tension, the silence. The sheet of glass seems to have been destroyed, liquidated, scattered – but there is no collapse, nothing. The endless patience of the heat seems to have melted the shards. I turn back, certain, to the refuge of the same brief hesitation.

A faint, dizzying border separates the too-thin glass I walk over timidly as I look back, searching for a foothold.

Translated from the German by Tess Lewis

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Bosnia: Guilt by Dissociation?
A Discussion with Slavenka Drakulic

William Phillips: I'm William Phillips, Editor of *Partisan Review*. We're glad to have with us tonight Slavenka Drakulic, one of the famous "five witches," the group of Croatian women writers recently denounced in a nationalist Croatian weekly for their dissident views. I want to introduce Edith Kurzweil, Executive Editor of *Partisan Review,* who will moderate the dicussion and the questions after the talk.

Edith Kurzweil: Many of you met Slavenka last year at our conference in Newark ["Intellectuals and Social Change in Central and Eastern Europe," *Partisan Review* Fall 1992] and afterwards here in New York. In the meantime she has written yet another wonderful book, called *The Balkan Express*.

Slavenka Drakulic: I'm very happy to be here with you. I arrived just two days ago from Zagreb. As you know, there is a war only in some parts of Croatia, such as Dalmatia to the south, so I'm not exactly coming from the war zone, but I'm close enough; Zagreb is only about thirty miles from the war zone. I have chosen to tell you a story tonight which has to do with responsibility, one of the things we should talk more about. This story, the last one in *Balkan Express,* is called "High-heeled Shoes." It is a very personal and painful experience about how I myself became an accomplice of the war. You know, it's not enough to see only what's happening to other people; at some point I realized I had to look into the mirror and see what had happened to me and see how much I have been changed by what has been going on around me. I believe that if we look away from the war, believing it is only the politicians and the military power and the nations or the states who are responsible for it, then we are delegating our citizens' human and personal responsibility. It is this refusal to become engaged on an individual level that has allowed the war to go on. I think that each of us has to look into the mirror.

This story is about a friend of mine, a journalist, who left Sarajevo a year ago. When it was still possible to leave Sarajevo by normal means of transportation, she came to Zagreb with only a suitcase and her six-year-old daughter, And she brought clothes only for her daughter because she had planned to leave her with friends and go back herself to Sarajevo in a week. While in Zagreb, she saw on television footage showing that her house had been burned down; she couldn't go back there, because there

Editor's Note: This discussion took place on May 27, 1993, in New York City.

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was no longer a place to go back to. She asked for our help, and because she was a long-time friend everyone helped get her an apartment, gave her some money, assist with the child, get her clothes. One day she came to my house, because my daughter was to give her some clothes, and among the things she gave her were a pair of high-heeled shoes, black patent leather shoes that ladies wear to parties, very fashionable shoes. The moment I saw my daughter give her the high-heeled shoes, I said to her, "Why did you give her high-heeled shoes? She doesn't need them, she's a refugee." My daughter's reaction was very strong. She said, "Mother, just because she's a refugee doesn't mean that she needs to go out barefoot. She needs somehow to confirm her identity, and this is a good thing, to give her high-heeled shoes." Of course I became puzzled by my own reaction, and started to think about it, and this is where my, what shall I call it, vivisection began. I think that it has much to do with the projection of this war, with the media, with the prejudices, with the symbolic level of the war, and perhaps with what I call the image of this war. Of course all of you have seen these photos and images on television, all these peasants' faces, people poorly dressed, especially refugees, and women covered with scars, their peasant faces, their hands, the way they dress.

Here I will digress from the story and show you several photos, so that you can understand better what I am talking about when I say "the image of this war." Some of the photos are quite shocking, but I think that by now we all have become immune to them. This is precisely the problem I would like to address. The first photo is from a magazine cover page that was printed last year. The war in Croatia was more or less over, and the war in Bosnia already well on its way. It is a picture that somehow escaped my attention then, but later on I wrote another story entitled "Three Little Hens," based on it. It's a picture of a dead man who is lying on the floor: his skull is open and there are three hens picking at his brain. This is a pretty dramatic photo, but we have seen even more dramatic ones, especially on television.

The second one appeared just a couple of weeks ago all over the world press. This is a blown-up picture of a woman who is hugging a skull. This third picture too is very meaningful for me. It's a cover of a slick, cultural, very highbrow magazine, which devoted a whole issue to the Balkans. On the cover they put a plain picture of two men and one woman. The woman has a dramatic expression of pain on her face, but you can't say which nationality any of them are or where it was taken. Are they Kurds, are they Serbs, are they Azerbaijanis? You can say only that they are peasants. Now you wonder why, after two years of war, the editors decided to put this picture on the cover of the Balkan issue. It's not depicting any kind of trauma, it's not of someone being beheaded or

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any such thing. It's just very revealing: it is how the world sees "the Balkans." The message is, "It is the peasants who are doing all this, you know." The problem is that since the very beginning, these kinds of pictures took over. The pictures clearly suggest cruelty, atrocities, savages, tribes, peasants, centuries-old hatreds; particular, complicated, strange. When I saw this cover page I said, "But this is not me, I don't belong to this, I don't identify with these people. I am urban, I have been living in a city all my life, I don't have anything to do with the peasants. Some other picture represents us, which other people, the people from the West, could identify with."

The photo in fact reinforces the underlying gap which has widened in spite of the Berlin Wall going down, in spite of Communism collapsing: East-West, developed-underdeveloped, city dwellers-peasants, civilization-savages. Of course the first reaction to these dramatic images a year ago, of concentration camps and dead bodies, was shock. This is one of the wars that has been covered the mostby the media; everything has happened in front of the television cameras. We have seen it all – every single atrocity. Saturation set in and became estrangement. For the West, it became less and less possible to find points of identification. Who are these savage and cruel people? What do they have in common with us? What do we have in common with them, when they are so obviously different? On the symbolic level, it was difficult to remove the barrier of "otherness." We, the civilized ones, can't understand what is going on there. Why all that killing? I think that all the pain and the suffering is somehow overshadowed by the images of cruelty and primitivism, sending a strong message and forming prejudices on the other side of the still-existing Berlin Wall. I'm purposely not talking about politics here, but rather about how political decisions were supported by the created images of the war, and by the problems of identification.

If we see the fighting nations are "different" and "special" and "violent," qualities which we very often would like to attribute for example to the Serbs, saying that they are genocidally evil – in other words, "different" – then the consequence is that no one is responsible for what is happening and for stopping the killings. Because if it is somehow built into this nation, then how could you possibly be expected to do anything about that? In short, the construction of the "otherness" is helping to create the indifference, the tolerance of massacres, ethnic cleansing, the repetition of history. By now, we should have learned one lesson about this war. It has the power to change the destiny of the Continent. Not because it could explode out of the borders of ex-Yugoslavia, but because the rules and principles for dealing with similar situations in Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR are being set right there and right now, and if we don't understand this, we don't understand

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anything about the ongoing war in the Balkans. No one can wash his hands of this war, no one can claim, "I don't know." There is no excuse for a single European state or nation, or even one person, to do nothing, to in fact become an accomplice to this war, and to the uncertain destabilized future of Europe.

Now let me go back to the story "High-heeled Shoes." As I said, I was quite puzzled by my own reaction, and then I started to think. I concluded that I somehow subconsciously and automatically put my friend into another category, into the category of "refugees." And I rejected my own responsibility. I delegated my own responsibility for a human being, for a friend of mine. I put her in an abstract category, and I delegated this responsibility to the Red Cross, to the State, to the Church, to the military; in other words, to the institutions. And in that way I think I betrayed my own friend. And what I recognized in myself is the process of creating "otherness," and I was very much frightened by it. I will read you the end of the story, because it's very difficult for me to *tell* you:

> Perhaps what I am also witnessing is a mechanism of self-defence as if there were a limit to how much brutality, pain or suffering one is able to take on board and feel responsible for. Over and above this, we are often confronted with more or less abstract entities, numbers, groups, categories of people, facts – but not names, not faces. To deal with pain on such a scale is in a way much easier than to deal with individuals. With a person you know you have to do something, act, give food, shelter, money, take care. On the other hand, one person could certainly not be expected to take care of a whole mass of people. For them, there has to be someone else: the state, Church, the Red Cross, Caritas, an institution. The moment one delegates personal responsibility to the institution, the war becomes more normal, orderly, and therefore more bearable. The person not only relieves himself or herself of responsibility, but also of a feeling of guilt too; the problem is still there, but it is no longer mine. Yes, of course I'll pay the extra war-tax, I'll gladly give away clothing or food to Caritas or any responsible organization, instead of to the suspicious-looking individuals ringing the doorbell claiming that they are refugees. Because what if they are not real refugees – your help might get into the "wrong" hands and you'll never earn that place in heaven that you'd promised yourself at the outset. The moment I thought Drazena ought not wear make-up or patent high-heeled shoes was the very moment when I myself put her into the group "refugee," because it was easier for me. But the fact that she didn't fit the cliché, that she disappointed me by trying to keep her face together with her make-up and her life together with a pair of shoes, made me aware of my own collaboration with this war.

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Now I think I understand what I couldn't understand before: how it happened that people who lived near German concentration camps didn't do anything, didn't help. In Claude Lanzmann's long documentary on the Holocaust, *Shoah*, there is a dialogue with one of the survivors from Chelmno, the place in Poland where Jews were first exterminated by gas, 400,000 of them.

"It was always this peaceful here. Always. Even when they were burning 2000 people – Jews – every day, it was just as peaceful. No one protested. Everyone went about his work. It was silent. Peaceful. Just as it is now," he said. . . .

I don't think our responsibility is the same – and I am not trying to equate the victims with those who murdered them in cold blood – all I'm saying is that it exists, this complicity: that out of opportunism and fear we are all becoming collaborators or accomplices in the perpetuation of war. For by closing our eyes, by continuing our shopping, by working our land, by pretending that nothing is happening, by thinking it is not our problem, we are betraying those "others" – and I don't know if there is a way out of it. What we fail to realize is that by such divisions we deceive ourselves too, exposing ourselves to the same possibility of becoming the "others" in a different situation.

The last time I saw Drazena she told me she was okay. She's staying in a friend's apartment until the autumn and freelancing for a local newspaper. Afterwards she will manage to find something else. She also told me that she is writing a war diary since that is the only way she can attempt to understand what is happening to her. "And what I find the most difficult to comprehend is the fact that there is a war going on," she said. "I still don't understand it. It's not that I expect a miracle to end this nightmare immediately. No, no. I mean, it is just hard for me to grasp that what is going on is the war. Do you know what a war is?" she asked, but I could tell from her look that she didn't really expect an answer.

. . . We are the war; we carry in us the possibility of the mortal illness that is slowly reducing us to what we never thought possible and I am afraid there is no one else to blame. We all make it possible, we allow it to happen. Our defense is weak, as is our consciousness of it. There are no them and us, there are no grand categories, abstract numbers, black and white truths, simple facts. There is only us – and, yes, we are responsible for each other.

And I also wanted to tell Drazena that she should go out and dance in her high-heeled shoes, if only she could.

Thank you.

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Edith Kurzweil: Thank you very much, Slavenka. Who would like to start asking questions?

Deborah Solomon: An obvious question is, what do you think the United States should do about the situation?

Slavenka Drakulic: The question is not so obvious. I'm not a politician, I'm a writer. But there are no simple answers. I can give you only my personal opinion. I think the United States shouldn't do anything on its own. If there is anything to be done, it should be done together with Europe. And both Europe and the United States are too reluctant to do anything. Forgive me for saying so, but I think wherever the United States has gone with force, there hasn't been a very brilliant outcome. So I'm very much afraid of intervening by bombing. A month ago, there were big talks about going in with planes and just bombing targets. Of course, I'm not an expert, but I think it is more important to set rules for the future, because obviously Yugoslavia, ex-Yugoslavia, the ex-Federation, with the new states emerging, and nationalism, and the war, may be the first place where this is happening, but it might not be the last one. So I think, if Europe, or the world for that matter, including the United States, doesn't set up very firm rules, the chaos will persist and recur. Europe and the United States should be asking questions like, should we allow changes of national borders? This is a big question. And how do we proceed? Do we proceed with force, or with some other measure? Are other measures, like sanctions, enough? What other kinds of pressures could be used? I think you can't make exemptions. You can't say, "Yes, now for this country, well, let's change the borders; let's divide Bosnia and Herzegovina among Croatia and Serbia, and give the Muslims some little enclave." What are you going to do then in the ex-USSR? They have nuclear arms, so maybe you are going to treat them differently, I don't know. I'm very pessimistic about the future of Europe. I would like to see a more consistent and more articulate politics towards the whole problem than just bombing, because after bombing, then what?

Philip Gourevitch: My question has to do with your idea about the image of the war and the image of peasants and refugees and something that is "other," because I suspect that a lot of the media has traditionally conceptualized the image of the oppressed as the image of a peasant, and the image of the refugee looks a certain way. In contrast, if you see the image of someone dressed like you or like me, you think, "They're not doing so badly." Or you think of them the same way as you do in this country of rich people getting sent to jail, or in some way suffering or losing their homes: there is a certain public satisfaction in those images.

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And so I'm curious how you would suggest that one could effectively project the image of a suffering affluent person, a suffering familiar-looking person.

Slavenka Drakulic: The problem is that the overaccumulation of these images of "otherness" creates the effect of their being ignored, because you cannot identify with these people, their appearance, their problems. I have written a book where you *can* find points of identification with the Western world, so the people from the West could see that "this could happen to us." Out of four and a half million people in Croatia, four million didn't experience war directly. They haven't been bombed. Their children haven't been killed. Somehow the whole region of the Balkans has been cut off. And it was a clear message that it doesn't belong to Europe. The reaction to my book showed that people can identify much more easily when you show them that you are the same as they are, that there is no difference. And in that way you can somehow claim some responsibility, because if there is no understanding there can't be any responsibility. I'm not saying that the majority of the people there are not peasants. Of course the peasants are the ones who have been resettled and moved, who are the refugees. I'm describing the effect of this kind of journalism, though I'm not blaming journalists individually: we have to remember that forty of them have been killed in this war.

Edith Kurzweil: I'd just like to add one point. I think that your question itself points to the problem of being presented with images. The presenters, it seems, know a great deal more than what they show us; that adds to the construction of otherness Slavenka talks about. For us, it's at yet another remove.

Philip Gourevitch: Remember that extraordinary image of the man who played the cello every day in Sarejevo? It was certainly a European image, I would say. And in terms of stirring a sense of responsibility in the West, I wonder whether that image really was more effective than the images of atrocity which at the same time make people "other" and also stir a greater sense of outrage. I'm just wondering really, I'm not challenging what you have pointed out.

Slavenka Drakulic: Okay, but have we seen any results of that outrage? What happened with all this outrage? Last year in August, images of concentration camps were projected for the first time, and nothing happened after that. There was the big story about tens of thousands of raped women, and nothing happened after that. So you have these worse and

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worse pictures projected; you have worse and worse atrocities committed; and the world is getting used to it. This is what I find so troubling, the phenomenon of getting used to it.

David Sidorsky: On the one hand, your objection is to the difference, the otherness that we see as the Balkans as savagery. And you have evoked the metaphor of the Nazi genocide against the Jews, to describe what is going on. On the other hand, you say the war should be treated as if it were *not* singular; that there should be rules for dealing with it, so that we would know how to deal with similar future happenings in, for instance, the former Soviet Union. But if that's the case you're making, then what strikes one as missing is a defensible political analysis that asserts this is a war of a fairly similar, repeatable sort.

As you say, it will repeat itself in Ossetia, in Azerbaijan, in many places. Namely, if you have a federation, and there is a secession which is disputed, and there are minorities who previously lived under a federation, then there is bound to be some sort of conflict. If Yugoslavia existed and a Serb population ruled, essentially, in Yugoslavia, with a Serb minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and there is a secession, then there is some need for some sort of solution on the political level. Croatia as an independent country has a solution; Slovenia had a solution. Bosnia-Herzegovina represents a very distinctive problem, and if one wants similarity, then at some point the political analysis comes; you suggested one part of it and dismissed it, that is to say, that there should be a Bosnian-Muslim autonomy. The Serbian population goes to Serbia, the Croatian population goes to Croatia. This, I understand, since you want rules for the future, is one formula of rules. There are others. There could of course be the insistence on the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a Muslim majority, and no aggression from Serbia, or from Croatia, where the Croatian population is, if I understand the issue.

My point – this is just a logical point, I'm not an expert on Yugoslavia – is that to stress the otherness, to compare it inappropriately to the Nazi-Jewish experience, where there was no ethnic conflict over a territorial issue at all, is precisely to say this is *not* similar. The similarity among all such issues has to do with the ethnic breakup of a federation, and this is, of course, exactly what you said about rules for what will happen in Georgia if North Ossetia and the Georgians wish to break up: what are the rules? But looking at the problem in this way, one stresses the political solution, or the political aspects of the problem; which, I gather, because of the demands you make on our sense of responsibility and emotional concern, you are not willing to address.

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Slavenka Drakulic: I don't raise the political solution because I don't know what the ideal political solution is. I'm not a politician myself. I see my task as a writer who asks the questions, not one who gives the answers. If you understood me to say that it would be the best thing to divide Bosnia between Croats and Serbs and give Muslims the enclave, I didn't say that; I mentioned it, but it's not what I favor. I would put Bosnia temporarily under some kind of protectorate.

Istvan Deak: In your beautiful reading something disturbs me: your analogy abou the situation of the Poles, the Jews, and the Germans. I would see it differently. The Poles, in my opinion, are presented and shown in a very prejudiced way in Claude Lanzmann's documentary film, *Shoah*. Lanzmann was hunting for examples to show Polish anti-Semitism, and he questioned the least intelligent Polish peasants to prove that the Poles were anti-Semitic. Secondly, the Poles were totally unarmed, except for the resistance movement. The resistance movement itself was hunted down and ended up in concentration camps. The picture is not simply that there were Poles outside and Jews inside, because if the peasant Poles had not worked next to Auschwitz, there would have been Poles and not only Jews inside Auschwitz. There were hundreds of thousands of Poles in Nazi concentration camps who died.

So I would say that the analogy that you make with today's situation perhaps is not quite right, because today's situation is absolutely insane, in that the United States and others could intervene. It's not that the Poles could have sacrificed themselves for the ghetto Jews but chose not to because they would have been killed. What makes the situation so difficult for us to understand and what makes us so exasperated is that it would be very easy for the Western powers to deal with Serbian aggression, and they are not doing it. And when you observe that United States intervention never has a positive outcome, I would say that it depends on what period you are talking about. It ended up quite successfully in World War Two, after it defeated Nazism. So that's why I wish you would either find another analogy, or explain to us why you think the situation is the same as with the Jews in Poland, that is, a world that is indifferent. The world's indifference today is far worse than the indifference of the Polish peasants.

Slavenka Drakulic: Well, I wasn't especially attacking Polish peasants. I was talking about particular things in *Shoah,* simply because I think that the metaphor of the Jews is a very good one for every similar situation. It is a very good metaphor now for the Muslims, because they are losing territory and they are virtually exterminated in some parts. There are refugees, and what we'll see next is going to be a wave of Muslim

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terrorism, all over Europe. I think that the metaphor of Jews works very well for the fact that they have been exterminated people, so that regardless of where it occurred, were they Poles or were they in Croatia – we had the Jews being killed in Croatian concentration camps – the point is that people were standing there and didn't help. We see things happening to others, and we think it doesn't have anything to do with us. This is the essence of that metaphor. It doesn't really matter whether we are speaking about Jews and Poles or about Muslims or any other kind of otherness. Each of us could become a part of that otherness, in another situation. I wouldn't like you to take this so literally. I think there's always a Jew and always a community.

Dimitri Urnov: You mentioned the repetition of the past, and we cannot but be concrete in talking about the past, and in taking some lessons out of it. What we have today is certainly an outcome of that remote past which repeats itself, but in what ways?

Slavenka Drakulic: I agree that part of this war in ex-Yugoslavia comes from the past, and it is somehow as if you had returned to the past, and as if it were a war of the living actually fighting the spirits of the dead of the Second World War. But I would say it is not only that, because I have lived in that country for forty-four years, and I know that we all lived in peace for a very long period of time. I see this war as having begun from the very top, not from the people, because in the ethnically mixed places like Vukovar, for example, we were not aware of any hidden conflicts. I would agree that the war began among the people, if it had in fact started five years ago, little by little, people fighting, and ethnic conflicts growing up to the point where the war started. But what I saw happening is just the opposite. I saw it happening at the very top. I saw the war being constructed, the idea of the war, the concept of the war, at a very high level, and then somehow in a spiral motion thrown down to the ground where it was almost impossible, much later on, to stop it, because when the first houses were burned, and the first people were killed, it was already done. I think it has very much to do with the fact that communism collapsed. You can't expect such a mammoth system, which existed for so many years and within which so many millions of people lived, to go away just like that.

Nationalism arose out of the collapse because as we know, historically, there was feudalism and after that communism, with no time in between for the development of a civil society and of the values of a democratic and liberal society. When, as it is popular to say, "the lid was lifted," you had two basic things that had always existed there: religion and the nation. And so, when the big system started to break down,

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people instinctively clung to the things that they knew. And this is one of the very important elements to remember, when you wonder how and why all of this nationalism was resurrected. Then, of course, the governments themselves perpetuated this kind of nationalism in order to stay in power. It was quite clear in the case of Milosevic. And I don't think that we have to have any doubts at this point about who started the war and how was it started in ex-Yugoslavia; it's all very well known. What is not known is that it was started at the very top.

Daniel Rose: It's an American characteristic to think that for every question there must be an answer; for every problem, there must be a solution, however theoretical. And when the American public considers the events that are unfolding right before their eyes, they are disconcerted at not being able to imagine some kind of rational future for this society. That's one of the American problems; they just can't picture in which direction rational people can head. And we'd appreciate your comments on what you see as alternative futures, or as the prospects directly ahead.

Slavenka Drakulic: Whenever I travel abroad, one of the questions I am asked is, "What do you think the future is going to be?" Now, the difficult part of it is that this is the hardest question that could be put to us, because the word "future" has been erased from our life. Somehow we don't think about the future. Somehow we don't even conceive, we don't have imagination enough to imagine what kind of life we would even wish. There are several reasons for that. One is the fact that we have been living in a communist society, and in a communist society you have this feeling that this society is eternal; nothing is ever going to change. Of course it was an illusion, but you have been raised with the idea not to question, not to think, and just to let things go, and so the future basically doesn't exist as a concept.

The other fact is that with the war, you learn to live day by day, and you don't invest in the future, not even in your imagination. Not even our politicians are doing that. We all agree somehow deep down in ourselves, subconsciously, that this war is going to go on for quite some time. I was asked at the beginning, "How long do you think the war will go on?" I would say, "Well, at least five years," and everybody was kind of surprised. There is also political manipulation, because I think that the government we have now, or the governments in ex-Yugoslavia, both the Milosevic and Tudjman governments, are the type of governments that can exist only under the conditions of war, because it suits them very well. They don't even speak about the future. If they were to do so, for example in Croatia, the first question would be, "What kind of government do we want? What kind of democracy are we going to have?"

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These questions are not welcomed at the moment, because every question about the future is met with the answer: "We have a war. So let's not talk about democracy now, let's first solve this problem." So in short, the answer is, yes, I like the American way of assuming that for every problem there is a solution. However, if there is a solution it's a long-term one, and it's very difficult to foresee the light at the end of the tunnel. For quite some time we'll have to deal with the problems we haven't solved. We haven't even solved the problem of the minority in Croatia, much less the Bosnian problem, which is a very burning question.

William Phillips: I gather that some intellectuals and writers behaved very badly in this situation. I wonder whether we're talking about a small number of writers and intellectuals, or most of them? How many behaved badly? I don't mean an actual count.

Slavenka Dravenka: I would say it's a very curious phenomenon. You will remember that at our conference Hans Magnus Enzensberger talked about intellectuals as bad people ["Intellectuals as Leaders," *PR* Fall 1992], and I quite agree with him. We concluded that intellectuals are not people of higher moral standards, and that it's rather dangerous to attribute higher moral standards to them. This is especially so when we are talking about intellectuals in Croatia and Serbia. In Serbia intellectuals actually elaborated the idea of "Greater Serbia" and helped the whole nationalist movement. It is a sad fact that its best writers actually went for all this. But Croatia is no better just because it's in a different position. Croatia is in a defensive war, so every single intellectual there is nationalist, but they believe they are nationalist for good reasons. So there are good and bad motivations. In general, before the war and during communist times we always had state writers; ninety-nine per cent of intellectuals and writers always went along with whatever politics there were or whoever ruled the country. There were very few independent individuals. It's the same now. So the intellectuals in both countries are "bad guys."

Elizabeth Dalton: Your point about making people "other" is a very good one, but one has to recognize also that there is survival value in not getting totally sucked into the disaster next door. Yet I think you're mistaken if you think that in this country there is a feeling of indifference to the problem. The paradoxical side is that the more outraged people feel by the images on television, the more enthusiastic they are for military intervention, which you and many other people feel might well

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be disastrous. I think that wave has sort of passed a bit, but that feeling of moral outrage did lead President Clinton and many others to say we must bomb.

Slavenka Drakulic: I have seen that the feelings of the people sometimes are very different from their government's behavior; there is a huge gap between the two. Recently, I read in the *International Herald Tribune* that there has been a poll in several European countries about how to proceed in this conflict, and whether they should intervene with European forces or not, and in most countries there was a huge number, ranging from forty to sixty per cent of the populations, saying, "Yes, we are for intervention," while the governments were behaving very conservatively. So there is some kind of gap between what the people and what the governments really see as necessary. Maybe there is something wrong with Western democracy; perhaps people have no power to influence the governments. But I have seen that they are getting desensitized, anesthetized by these kinds of images. There are two sides of the media, of course; one is to bring the story out and to let the world know. But the question is, "What then?" What do you do with information? To inform may not be enough. I am just saying that we – intellectuals, writers, people in general – are not dealing enough with the moral issues, with the moral questions, with the questions of responsibility. I myself am puzzled why European intellectuals are not posing any of these questions. This war hasn't been an issue among European intellectuals at all. Intellectuals next door don't discuss it. They pretend not to understand, but I wonder if they want to understand what's going on. This puzzles me. I see it as closing your eyes, I see it as turning your head away. I am a bit bitter because I come from there. Maybe an insider's look into these problems is different from an outsider's position.

Edith Kurzweil: I want to follow up on that. Of course we all want the slaughter to stop. But can it be stopped with bombing? And, if it were to stop with bombing, where do we bomb? Do we know, can we even separate one population from another? After all, there are all these enclaves.

Slavenka Drakulic: Well, I think nothing could be won without ground troops engagement. I read an article by an expert who said that without two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers nothing could be solved at all, and who is going to put two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers in Bosnia? It's yet another issue.

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William Phillips: You can get two hundred and fifty thousand troops, if the Europeans and the American government combine. The question is, as I see it, people are claiming that intervention wouldn't solve the problem. Now, I don't know the answer to that. You say you're not a politician, but you know more about it than we do. Do you think if America and the European nations send troops in it could stop the slaughter?

Slavenka Drakulic: Well, I suppose, yes. Someone has to stop it, but the problem is that it's an enormous number of soldiers, enormous sums of money, and the question is, why would someone do it?

Joanna Rose: I have heard that there are Muslims, Turks, who are willing to go in with troops, but that the rest of the European countries do not want them to go in. There is money, there are troops, and there is a country willing to go in and help the Muslims in Bosnia. Well, is that a way of solving it?

Slavenka Drakulic: Yes, of course they would probably solve it, but we should also take a look into their interest in the whole issue. You need a political solution, a proper political solution for that, and without it I am afraid it can't work.

Joanna Rose: It has to be troops you like, right?

Slavenka Drakulic: I think without combined forces under the auspices of the UN, nothing much could be done. And as we all know, the UN is a terribly bureaucratic organization, and it's terribly slow. God knows how many people will die before they do something. But as I said, we can have a think-tank about what should be and could be done there. I am very sorry if I disappointed you, but I don't have any political solution, any ready-made recipes, and I don't even see it as my task to do find them.

Jack Diggins: You are puzzled about why intellectuals in the West have no response to this issue. I think it's mainly because a number of writers thought that communism was going to solve the problem of religion and nationality, but it has been a squalid failure. Many people felt that with the fall of communism, democracy would be able to take care of these issues, yet that doesn't seem to be able to do so. So everyone is at a loss, and there's nothing in the heritage of Western political thought to deal with these issues. We thought the Enlightenment would take care of it, but that hasn't happened: we thought modern technology and various

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other institutions would take care of these issues, but they didn't, and so we are at a loss. I also want to say, when you suggest that the problem starts at the top, I am really puzzled. To me, there was no problem while there was a top: there was an authoritarian system which kept a lid on this, and when that collapsed, the underlying problem of human hatred of people toward one another emerged. The elements of human animosity and human sinfulness and aggression can be manipulated, but I don't think they can be discounted.

Slavenka Drakulic: Yes. I want to answer the last part first, on why it was that when the lid was capped, we had an authoritarian society, and everything was quiet and in order. In Yugoslavia that was not the case, because the pressure wasn't strong enough to keep it under the lid; if there was anything boiling it would have been very obvious. The only thing we had was the Croatian Spring in 1971, and it was really a mild decentralization, not really a proper movement in the sense that Croatia wanted to secede. So I think that if we are speaking about lids and authoritarian pressure in a society, Yugoslavia is not a good example, because people really had started to live together, and there were a lot of mixed marriages, especially in Bosnia, about twenty to thirty percent of the children now are of mixed marriages. They have to take sides today; this is one of the saddest things about this war.

And I wouldn't really speak about hatred, except that I would say we have to be clear; it's not that nationalism didn't exist at all. I think that it was there all the time, but when I say that the war came from the top I mean that there were methods used to stir up emotions. It's not that everyone wasn't aware of what happened in the Second World War, that Serbs were killing Croats, Croats were killing Serbs, and so on, but it is like a disease. Under certain circumstances it develops and becomes an acute disease. Other than that it stays dormant, not necessarily developing into something malignant. This is the best metaphor that I can use for what is happening with nationalism in my country.

What I gather is that you are giving some kind of excuse for intellectuals because they are confused with this situation. Yes, I think they are confused, of course, I am confused myself, but this is not an excuse, because their task is to think about this, and to ask, and to argue, and to try to find some kind of solutions. However, you mentioned one very interesting point which I didn't: you said that communism contained the problems, and that we had hoped that democracy would solve them. Now, what is happening with democracy in Eastern Europe? Each representative of these new governments, and their new presidents, came and said, "Now, this is democracy. We are bringing you democracy." Democracy is like a gold medal. This is it. And what do you have? You

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have a democratic constitution, okay; you have a multiparty system, and you have free elections. There are the three institutions that you have." Yet these are no more than formalities, since all the parties are really working very much within the mentality of a one-party system. Then you say, "Well, this is giving democracy a bad name, it's somehow changing the concept of democracy itself, because they are using this word, this concept, and democracy is not really happening." So what you have is some kind of a backlash, even a danger that at some point people will say, "Oh, this is democracy? This is what we were fighting for? Excuse me, we are losing jobs, we don't have any security, there's an economic crisis, the people in government are the same people as before – in many countries, literally – so they are corrupt, they are just putting the money in their pockets."

Democracy is something that people have to take, that they have to build – slowly. And for people in Eastern Europe who have been living all their lives with a totalitarian mentality, it's very difficult. I have seen how it works. They are afraid to even start doing the little things – holding gatherings, forming ideas, citizens' groups – and thus it is going very slowly, because on the one hand you have very authoritarian governments, and on the other hand, the people don't have the feeling that they are citizens, that they are individuals, especially not in mass societies like nationalist ones.

Daphne Merkin: You began earlier in the evening by saying that one of the problems with the media representation of the war is its focus on peasants, which reduces our perception of the population to an "other," other than ourselves, a view I don't particularly agree with. But what surprises me is, I understand American diffidence about intervening;, but why are you diffident as an observer – not as a politician, which you said you are not, but as a writer and observer – about the American impulse to intervene, which is based precisely on the perception that these are not "others," but humans like ourselves? You did make one rather slighting remark about American intervention not always being successful, but as someone else pointed out, in fact it has been successful in major instances.

Slavenka Drakulic: In the Second World War, yes.

Daphne Merkin: Counter-aggression is commonly the only way to stop certain kinds of aggression. So your diffidence puzzles me, more than American diffidence, and I wonder if you're resigned, more than you know – this is a question, or speculation – to the "otherness" of this war, its "in-house" quality. Is your equivocating when you were asked about American intervention in fact a reflection of your own sense that this is a

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rather insular, ongoing conflict that is not amenable to a dashing international assault? There's a certain resignation in what you are saying.

Slavenka Drakulic: Well, I have to say that if the message that you get is that this is an insular war and therefore I don't want America to intervene, that goes against everything I have ever written, which says, "We are as you are, and something should be done about that." So it's not insular. I see it as a European problem. Europe should be first to engage in solving this problem. But the problem with Europe is it thinks it's not part of Europe. So I think it's very important for America to do something, but not on its own. What I think should be done at this point is to find a principled solution for this kind of problem. What I understand is meant by intervention would be the bombing of certain strategic targets in Bosnia – Serbian supply lines and so on. This for me is not the solution. I think the solution should be more complete and more principled, and therefore I don't worry so much about "intervention yes or no," but "is this something that is going to contribute to the principal solution of the problem, which is in the first place a European problem?" What I'm saying is: bombing is not enough per se. Ground troops are necessary. This is what I understand from the analyses I have read. Because this is a European problem and because this is a problem of principle, we should find, fight for, a principled solution at this point. It's not enough to speak only about intervention. This is the only action that I see as essential to take, apart from stopping the slaughter.

Joanna Rose: You said that it is not for humanistic purposes that America would go to Bosnia. I have to defend my country. There is no other reason we would enter this situation except for humanistic purposes, because it is against every other interest of ours to enter for any other reason.

Slavenka Drakulic: But you are not entering it. I would love America to go in for purely humanistic reasons. Great! But it hasn't happened.

Edith Kurzweil: Let me interject some kind of explanation, something that I have watched for many, many years going back and forth between here and Europe. Americans are always, as Joanna Rose said, involved in the humanistic principle; ever since Wilson, they've been "making the world safe for democracy." Every time I've gone to Europe I've heard that America has intervened here and there because it has some imperialistic ends in mind, and this is a kind of clash of opinions, of principles, that is not understood from one side to the other, and we then continue it here in a national discussion.

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Slavenka Drakulic: That is why these conflicts have to be solved as a joint project of America, Europe, NATO, and the United Nations. But it has to be a joint thing, not only the Americans going in. I am sorry if I sound very disappointingly conservative on that issue, but I do really think that if America pushes Europe into doing something and they do something together, fine. Yet in my view this is essentially a European problem. The Europeans have to solve it because they are going to have enormous problems in the future if they don't sort this out.

William Phillips: Why don't the European countries, in your opinion, want to do anything?

Slavenka Drakulic: Because they are fighting among themselves. There is this problem of France and Britain and Germany, and they have their own conflicts about the war, how to solve it and who is for what kind of solution.

William Phillips: Well, they could just stop the slaughter. Why not?

Slavenka Drakulic: If it would be so easy and simple, they would do it, probably.

William Phillips: I'm not sure.

Edith Kurzweil: I think you're being naive.

Slavenka Drakulic: It's also very sad and disappointing to see all these big forces fighting among themselves about who should do what and who should send troops and how much money is needed, while people are being killed every day. This is the biggest frustration of all. And this is where you feel you can't do anything about it.

William Phillips: I don't think that's quite an accurate picture of why America is not doing as much as it should. Let me start by saying that I'm struck by your remark that American intellectuals have done very little about the situation in presenting some some kind of united group attitude and demanding some kind of action. Now, somebody said that that's because intellectuals are confused. Well, intellectuals are often confused: it doesn't seem to prevent them from doing things. For instance, they protested the Vietnam War, and they were confused at the time; and they supported World War Two, and they were also confused at that time. So I don't think confusion is the reason. I think that what has happened here

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is that the Clinton Administration can't make up its mind what to do because it's afraid of public opinion. There's a certain amount of public opinion that's simply isolationist, but there's another sector of public opinion, which seems to be supported by military experts, asserting that no intervention will help unless it's so enormous that it can't be undertaken. And the reason given is that the situation in the former Yugoslavia is so complex that no military action can disentangle the various forces and stop the slaughter. I think that's one reason why many of us have hesitated to take a bold and positive stand. Now, what do you think? Is there any truth in this argument that the situation is so complex that intervention by Americans alone or Americans with European troops won't do any good? Is that a false argument?

Slavenka Drakulic: I think it's a false argument. I think that a proper number of troops and proper military action could stop it, but I think it has to go along with other measures to solve the problem, to be very simple on that point.

David Sidorsky: I'd like to support your hesitation about intervention from the United States, but on different grounds, because I agree entirely with Joanna Rose that the only grounds for American intervention is what would be called humanitarian intervention. And indeed it's precisely that, because the intervention would have to be so large that you're speaking about significant casualties. The Serbs are going to fight back; they're going to kill people. And then, too, people pay a price for humanitarian intervention without any national interest – that's usually a compelling reason why people say countries should intervene only where there is a national interest – unless they are part of a large consort of nations, usually the case with humanitarian intervention, in which situation you assume that the casualties would be minimal.

The second comment has to do with your reference to a "principled solution." There is no principled solution in one sense of the word "principle," because there are only two principles here, federation and secession. Now, you do not wish, I assume, to force a refederation: you supported the Croatian unilateral secession, you support Slovenia's unilateral secession, presumably you support Bosnia-Herzegovina's unilateral secession. The alternative then is to accept the principle of secession, and never cross boundaries against a seceded state. Someone should have taught this to the Union vis-a-vis the Confederacy.

Jan Kavan: I'm not sure if I agree with your explanation that Europe is not going in with a resolution to stop the slaughtering simply because the European powers, Britain, France, Germany and so on, cannot agree

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among themselves on the solution. I think that's probably one aspect, but in fact in the majority of the meetings among the foreign ministers of the EC, there was a prevailing consensus that, first, they don't have a proper political solution, other than that they have different ones which would clash; and secondly, and primarily I think, they don't want to risk losing the lives of their own soldiers, because that would go down badly with public opinion, again since they don't have a national interest in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They have an interest as Europeans to keep Europe stable and secure, which is in fact also in the United States' interest. The United States has, obviously, humanistic moral motivation, but that is not its only motivation. It is in the interest of the United States to have a stable and secure Europe, and it has a responsibilty as the world's remaining superpower to help. The objection of the Europeans was that Americans offered to lift the embargo, to help the Muslims defend themselves and to bomb certain strategic targets, but they were not prepared to commit American troops, risk American lives, until a peaceful solution could be agreed upon. And once again, the Europeans felt that this would endanger the lives of their own soldiers. I agree with you that bombing alone would not solve the problem but exacerbate it.

I think that, as David Sidorsky mentioned, federation and secession are both principles, but they are far from the only ones. The other one is to find out whether it's possible any longer to have a multinational, multi-ethnic unit, which, after all, Bosnia-Herzegovina was. At that time, the government argued that it was one of the few regions left in the former Communist Europe which had managed to have a functioning multi-ethnic and multinational society. Is that in any way possible now?

Slavenka Drakulic: I'm grateful that you pointed out one of the essential issues, the hesitation of America and Europe to put the lives of their soldiers at risk, and rightly so. But on the issue of other kinds of solutions, it comes down to the question, "Is it possible for a multi-ethnic state like Bosnia to exist, or does it really have to divide into cantons and provinces, ethnically cleansed in this or that way?" Whether we are dealing with the federation or with secession or with the possibility of a multi-ethnic community, we must address the question of the borders and the question of the minorities. If we are speaking about nation-states, then we have to define the borders and minorites. Of course, the most substantial difference is whether this happens with a war or without war. The problem with the war is that while we discuss and try to find the solutions, it goes on. And in the face of it I, both as a writer and as a person who lives there, feel quite helpless.

Edith Kurzweil: Slavenka, thank you very much.

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PEARL K. BELL

Fiction Chronicle

THE ROBBER BRIDE. By Margaret Atwood. Nan Talese/Doubleday. $23.50.
A BIG STORM KNOCKED IT OVER. By Laurie Colwin. HarperCollins. $22.00.
BODY AND SOUL. By Frank Conroy. Houghton Mifflin/Seymour Lawrence. $24.95.
SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW. By Peter Hoeg. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $21.00.
WHILE ENGLAND SLEEPS. By David Leavitt. Viking. $22.00.
TIME REMAINING. By James McCourt. Alfred A. Knopf. $21.00.
LITTLE KINGDOMS. By Steven Millhauser. Poseidon Press. $21.00.
NO OTHER LIFE. By Brian Moore. Nan Talese/Doubleday. $21.00.
THE HOLDER OF THE WORLD. By Bharati Mukherjee. Alfred A. Knopf. $22.00.
A SUITABLE BOY. By Vikram Seth. HarperCollins. $30.00.

Novels written on the cusp of journalistic history often leave one with little further to say. The story is so closely tied to current events that it is immediately exhausted in its topical relevance by reviewers; everything that can be said about the novel is somehow contained within those events. This is the fate even of a novel as passionately felt and beautifully written as Brian Moore's *No Other Life,* which deals quite transparently with the figure of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the quixotic revolutionary priest who became the first legally elected president of Haiti and was forced into exile by the military dictators who now rule the country with a viciously iron fist. Moore's depiction of the character based on Father Aristide and the agonies of that ragged Caribbean island are such palimpsests of the events that no depth remains to be explored. The reader of *No Other Life* becomes so trapped in the airless space between the surface of the daily newspapers and the narrative Moore has drawn from those pages that the novel – and the reading – remain desperately unresolved. A pity.

This leaves nine other novels from the season's crop to deal with, and they are, as always, a decidedly mixed bag. There does emerge one intriguing curiosity. Three of these novels – Bharati Mukherjee's *The Holder*

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of the World, Peter Hoeg's *Smilla's Sense of Snow,* and Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride* – display on their dust jackets a single, unblinking eye, a favorite image of Magritte's. This may not be a conscious conspiracy of the book designers, yet it is a tribute to the power of the cultural zeitgeist, since the single transfixing eye even turns up on a coffee mug featured in the Christmas catalogue of the Museum of Modern Art. (Never underestimate the rapidity with which a cultural icon becomes a marketing cliché.) Other than the eye on their jacket designs, the three novels have absolutely nothing in common. But a reviewer, faithful to the task of reporting the cultural trends of the year, has to train a jaundiced eye on this Cyclopean phenomenon. To turn, now, to the books within the jackets:

Bharati Mukherjee is an Indian writer from Calcutta who has spent many years in Canada and the United States. She first came to the New World in the early sixties, to study at the Iowa Writers Workshop, and is now a professor of English at Berkeley. In her previous novels and stories she has dealt with the profoundly disturbing sense of dislocation and displacement experienced by Indian immigrants in the alien cultures of North America, and she can be both compassionate and slyly satirical about the plight of exile. Though Mukherjee's fiction until now has concentrated on contemporary Indian women who have pulled up stakes to seek a better life in a very foreign elsewhere, in *The Holder of the World* she has drastically reversed her customary vantage point.

Her protagonist, Hannah Easton, is an American woman in seventeenth-century Salem, Massachusetts, whose destiny carried her east to the Coromandel coast of India. In Mukherjee's intricate narrative design, Hannah's story is told by the oddly named Beigh Masters, of present-day Massachusetts, an "asset researcher" who hunts for rare art and jewels craved by wealthy clients. As a Yale undergraduate Beigh became fascinated by the American Puritans, whose history left her with "a hunger for connectedness, a belief that with sufficient passion and intelligence we can deconstruct the barriers of time and geography." Browsing in a New England museum, she happens upon an Indian miniature depicting a blonde Caucasian woman, in elaborate Mogul court dress, and becomes obsessed with unriddling the story of this unlikely presence in India. Hannah's astonishing life then becomes the heart of the novel, as Beigh pursues this woman's history through logbooks, memoirs, letters, Indian paintings, and the promptings of a daring imagination.

Born in late-seventeenth-century Salem, Hannah was abandoned at the age of five by her widowed mother, who had run off into the forest with a Native American lover: "the ultimate unnatural crime of Puritan life." Brought up by neighbors, Hannah marries an Englishman full of braggadocio and blarney, who carries her off first to England and then to

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the Coromandel coast, where he takes a job with the East India Company and tries to break down his wife's "Puritan failing of frugality." With an irrepressible curiosity about the exotic world she finds herself in, Hannah recapitulates her mother's scandalous history and eventually becomes the lover of a Hindu rajah, with whom she finds the erotic bliss inconceivable in Puritan America.

In the last third of the novel, Mukherjee powerfully recounts the bloody battle waged by the rajah against the last great Mogul emperor, Aurengzeb, in the course of which the intrepid Hannah saves her lover's life and kills his enemy. Along the way the novelist fires some enraged salvos at the English exploitation of her native country, the narrow-minded contempt for Indian customs and culture, the greedy plunder which reminds her of "Manhattan in the mid-eighties. . . ." As the tale comes full circle, Hannah returns with her child by the handsome rajah to straitlaced Salem, where the little girl, in pointed allusion to Hawthorne and *The Scarlet Letter,* is called Black Pearl.

Into her tightly constructed tapestry, Bharati Mukherjee has woven dozens of characters, a huge trove of skillfully textured detail, and a deft guide to the "tangled lines of India and New England." Armed with formidable research, the novelist has attempted in *The Holder of the World* (the title refers to a legendary diamond owned by the Emperor Aurengzeb) to span past and present, history and fable, reality and myth, plain clothes and bejewelled folklore. All this, packed into two hundred eighty-six pages, inevitably overwhelms us with its excess of detail on too many levels. Mukherjee remarked in a recent interview that she didn't want to write a big, conventional historical novel: "I want to bring the world into the three-hundred-page novel without losing the complexity." Unfortunately, in her zealous determination to crowd so much onto such a small canvas, she sacrifices the clarity and coherence essential to complexity. Though her originality and eloquence are impressive, the resulting confusion is too steep a price to pay.

In 1987, the Indian writer Vikram Seth – he is also an economist, a playwright, travel writer, scholar of Chinese literature, and a poet – published a short, delightful novel, entirely in verse, called *The Golden Gate.* Written while Seth was a graduate student at Stanford, *The Golden Gate* presented the lives, in the stately form of linked sonnets, of a group of yuppie friends and lovers in San Francisco. Remarkably agile and up-to-date in its mastery of California pop-idiom and American slang, *The Golden Gate* charmed and bedazzled with its wit, vivacity, literary ingenuity, warm-hearted satire. In contrast to that, no one could have predicted that Vikram Seth's next book, *A Suitable Boy,* which took him more than six years to research and write, would at 1,349 pages long be many times

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longer than *The Golden Gate,* and prove so doggedly nineteenth-century in spirit and manner.

What is puzzling about Seth's gargantuan tome is not so much its length as its plain, unevocative style, the absence of the wit and literary vitality he displayed so winningly in *The Golden Gate*. Though the publisher has promoted the book as "a good old-fashioned read," *A Suitable Boy* poses a daunting physical challenge to any reader not endowed with arms of steel to hold 1,349 pages upright for hours at a time. Of course great length of itself doesn't necessarily discredit a novel: *War and Peace* is certainly long (though shorter than *A Suitable Boy*!), but Tolstoy's world and the characters who populate it capture our attention so vividly from the start that length is quickly beside the point. What is dismaying about Seth's saga of India in the early 1950s is its general monotony.

In his multi-family chronicle in the manner of *romans fleuves* such as Roger Martin du Gard's *Les Thibault* or Georges Duhamel's *Chroniques de Pasquier* (the French had an enormous appetite for such cycles of interrelated novels between the wars), Seth has crammed a *roman cycle* into a single volume. Its hundreds of characters, belonging almost without exception to the middle and upper classes, are divided among four intertwined extended families – the Hindu Mehras and Kapoors; the Bengali Chatterjees (also Hindu); and the Muslim Khans – who rattle past us time and again like rusty freight trains; but scarcely any of them sustained this reader's interest or sympathy enough for me to care whether they vanished from the story altogether.

The principle thread of plot has to do with a pretty and likeable young woman, Lata Mehra, a literature student at the local university in Brahmpur (a fictitious town). Her sentimental goose of a mother will not rest until Lata has been properly married to "a suitable boy" – hence the title. In between the emergence of several candidates for Lata's pretty hand, we learn a great deal about land reform, the important 1952 election (the first election after independence in 1947), Hindustani music, Muslim courtesans, Hindu-Muslim enmity, university politics, and much, much more. All of this might have been at least comfortably informative if Seth had appended a glossary to his text for readers who have no idea what *khatri, alaap,* or *nimbu paani* mean. But he uses Indian words throughout as though everyone knows what they mean, and whole paragraphs must be read by *firangi* (foreigners) in a fog of incomprehension.

It may well be that a hunger for huge family chronicles still persists among some arbiters of literary excellence, and why not? Some readers may find them as satisfying as a seven-course Christmas dinner. When the committee for England's prestigious and lucrative Booker Prize failed to nominate Seth's novel among the contenders last October, there was out-

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rage in some unexpected places. *The Wall Street Journal* was shocked that a book "Tolstoyan in its breadth of sympathy and humanity" could be passed over, and *The Economist* thundered that the committee's decision "is almost beyond comprehension. . . . Not only is [*A Suitable Boy*] superior to any novel in contention for the Booker this year; it is also superior to most past winners. . . ." (These included A. S. Byatt's ingenious *Possession* and Michael Ondaatje's radiant *The English Patient,* both fervently praised by most critics.)

To be fair: Seth's novel does have a few inspired episodes; the most memorable, excerpted in *The New Yorker,* is a horrifying account of a religious festival on the banks of the Ganges that turns into a nightmare when hundreds of pilgrims are crushed to death on rickety, grossly overcrowded bridges. But too much of *A Suitable Boy* tried my patience as it meanders and winds and wanders. Obviously one reader's tedium is another reader's humanity. Yet if one believes that novelists need to have some controlling sense of selection and discrimination, neither of which is evident in *A Suitable Boy,* we must remain skeptical about its achievement as literature. And one can't help wondering how many of Seth's admirers read every word.

About three decades ago, Frank Conroy, then thirty-one years old, published an autobiography, *Stop-Time,* that with astringent freshness and candor portrayed the perils and wonders of boyhood. The book's eccentric intelligence, the confident and jaunty authority of Conroy's prose, marked the exhilarating start of an exciting career. But aside from *Midair,* a volume of competent but largely unremarkable stories published in 1985, the big, important novel one assumed Conroy would produce was not forthcoming until now. *Body and Soul* is big all right, but it is not important. And its shortcomings stem in large part from the novelist's unfortunate choice of a musical genius as his central character.

Novels about great musicians are usually more flat than sharp. Words somehow resist an earnest attempt to render, in a lexical context, the exact nature of our response to a pianist's or violinist's prodigious virtuosity. A music critic appraising a particular performance can fix our attention by concentrating on technical matters, missed notes, right or wrong tempos, a conductor's or soloist's specific interpretation of a musical composition. But novelists are concerned with a different task – how to represent music, and the emotions it arouses, in words. And the words the writer chooses are, almost of necessity, inadequate and unconvincing.

Years ago there was a vogue for movies about famous composers in which, say "Beethoven" wrote the "Moonlight Sonata" on a sheet of music paper and proceeded to play a heart-throbbing rendition of the

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piece to show his love for the woman swooning in the background. They don't make movies like that any more, thank God, but novelists trying to convey the essence of music through words can sound equally silly. As the genius of *Body and Soul* ruminates at one point, "But don't you think it's practically impossible to write about music directly? It doesn't lend itself to words." Conroy should have taken these sentiments more seriously.

The trouble begins on the first page, when Conroy writes that Claude Rawlings "was six years old, and much of his thinking, especially when he was alone, went on without words, went on beneath the level of language." One can have wordless images, but there can be no "thinking" without language, and Conroy's meaning seems muddled from the start. In any case, the little boy is locked in a squalid basement apartment on Third Avenue all day while his huge and sullenly unloving mother drives a taxi. One day Claude discovers an out-of-tune piano in the back room and eureka, a star is born. From the kindly music-store owner who first discerns Claude's budding genius, through a succession of astounded teachers, brilliant recitals, louder and louder acclaim, we follow our hero's development not only as a magnificent piano virtuoso but as a composer, a lover, a husband, and so on. There is nothing at which he does not effortlessly succeed, and at the end of the novel we leave Claude, in his early thirties, as he is about to dazzle the world with his performance of the solo part in his own concerto. That is it.

Among the dozens of characters there is scarcely a credible human being to be found; everyone exists as an appendange to the hero's genius. In the earlier *Stop-Time,* Conroy endowed a boy's struggle to master the yo-yo with an emotional vitality that the high-minded hosannas to Mozart in *Body and Soul* never attain. When Conroy tries to capture what music means to Claude, the prose turns leaden and hackneyed: "Music is here! It was so much larger than life, so ineluctably strong, so potent an indicator of a kind of heaven on earth," and so on. Not even the vast amount of information about the classical piano repertoire that Conroy sprinkles into his story can prevent such writing from sounding not only banal but tone-deaf, and badly in need of tuning.

Steven Millhauser, the author of the three inventive stories collected in *Little Kingdoms,* began his literary career with a hilarious and ingenious novel titled *Edwin Mullhouse: The Life and Death of an American Writer, 1943-1954, by Jeffrey Cartwright.* When he wrote the book, Millhauser was a graduate student in English at Brown, coming up for air from the loneliness of the long-distance thesis. In this putative homage to a child literary genius who died at the age of eleven, Millhauser produced a cunning parody of Literary Biography (Semi-Worshipful) and the dry-as-

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dust tomes ground out in the airless carrels of countless university libraries. Along the way, the novelist mockingly deflated pompous psychologists, children's books, kindergarten, and especially the animated cartoons which obsessed his pre-adolescent wunderkind.

After this comic diversion, Millhauser turned away from the youthful highjinks of parody. In two volumes of novellas – *The Barnum Museum* and *In the Penny Arcade* – he sought to dramatize the versatility of the imagination by depicting craftsmen at work on non-verbal art forms that acquire magical properties. "Peopling" his strangely allegorical tales with makers of puppets, miniatures, automatons, board games and circus props, all of them rigorously described, Millhauser sought to convey the means by which popular and folk arts of diverse kinds achieved their effects. But he was equally absorbed by the moral context of such work – the way the obsession with creative artifice conflicts, at times tragically, with the imperatives of reality, and why the skillful craftsmen of the marvelous objects have such a precarious connection with the ordinary world.

In the opening tale of his new volume, "The Little Kingdom of J. Franklin Payne," Millhauser has renewed his early fascination with animated cartoons, which he now regards neither satirically nor playfully. Payne draws comic strips in the 1920s for a Midwestern newspaper, and rises later to the loftier rank of editorial cartoonist on a New York daily. But his true passion, kept secret from the quotidian world, is animated cartoons, which he longs to perfect as a serious art form and preserve from the coarse demands of commercial success. As Payne devotes more and more of his time and manic concentration to this private passion, he jeopardizes his newspaper job and wrecks his marriage but refuses to abandon what has become his vital center, his secret life.

The novella is thus a portrait of the artist as a hostage to artifice, enslaved by his fierce ambition. As Payne labors cruelly long hours on the thirty thousand drawings for his animated masterpiece, "Voyage to the Dark Side of the Moon," he is lured more and more deeply into the make-believe of art and invention, seduced by "the desire to release himself into the free, the fantastic, the deliberately impossible." In the end, reaching for "an intoxicating release from the constriction of things," Payne becomes the helpless victim of his artistic delusions and surrenders his grasp of actuality entirely to the fantasies of madness.

The most haunting and most elaborately conceived tale in the volume, "Catalogue of the Exhibition," recounts the life, and meticulously describes the work, of one Edmund Moorash, a visionary American painter, far ahead of his time, who dies, still in his thirties, in 1846. In a domestic arrangement reminiscent of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Moorash lives with his devoted sister in an isolated corner of rural

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Connecticut. Within the framework of an art-show catalogue, Millhauser narrates a melodramatic story about art and death, with deepening shadows of unrequited love, and faint suggestions of forbidden incestuous longings. With cool detachment, the catalogue writer interleaves minutely detailed descriptions of the twenty-six canvases in the exhibition with the biographical facts of the painter's brief life, and the catastrophic role of another brother-and-sister couple in that life as the doomed quartet moves inexorably toward a violent denouement.

While Millhauser's experimental form is certainly intriguing, it does raise some prickly questions about the interplay of verbal narrative and nonverbal art. Why does the anonymous author of the catalogue describe in such copious detail Moorash's dark, antirealist, sinister portraits and landscapes, when for the viewer the canvases are presumably hanging on the wall? (Obviously, because the paintings exist only in Millhauser's imagination.) What Millhauser would seem to be concerned with here are philosophical problems of representation and reference, which are implied in Moorash's theory of the demonic properties of art: his desire to smash "the mimetic fetters" in order to release into paint "the human mystery." Reading this enigmatic but strangely captivating story, which does not easily yield its meaning and implications, one cannot unequivocally decide whether or not the catalogue device, rather than a more conventional form of storytelling, intensifies the impact of Moorash's life and work on our imagination, or beclouds it.

In a brief, appreciative essay written in 1990 about "Catalogue of the Exhibition," Irving Howe felt that the experimental form "seems to work, as if each comment on the paintings, or even the paintings themselves, should be taken as, somehow, a reflection of or on what is happening within the story." But almost immediately Howe qualified his positive assent: clearly he was not entirely convinced by the experiment, and neither is this reader. What remains deeply etched in our minds is Millhauser's uncanny skill at representation – enabling us to visualize the colors and shapes and moods of difficult, unconventional paintings that are visible only to the writer's inner eye, and to experience the potent emotion driving the artist as he worked. And we can also see why Millhauser is able to use verbal representation to deal with non-verbal artifacts, while Frank Conroy, resorting to fuzzy prose to arouse our emotions, cannot.

At one point in the story the catalogue writer declares, "It is impossible to make a neat distinction between the world of art and the world of nature, or the world of imagination and the world of experience," and what Millhauser brilliantly conveys is the osmosis between these worlds. Still, the full range of the novelist's meaning in this novella does remain elusive, but as Howe wisely concluded, "A good piece of fiction always

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resists complete elucidation."

There are impenetrable mysteries of a very different kind in *Smilla's Sense of Snow* by the young Danish novelist Peter Hoeg. For one thing, it's hard to figure out what genre this dense and tantalizing story belongs to – is it a murder mystery, science fiction, morality tale, or an intricately plotted adventure wrapped in a carapace of technical information, à la Tom Clancy? At first reading, it appears to be a manically complicated thriller narrated by a truculent, ferociously opinionated, erudite, disorganized, strangely beguiling woman of thirty-seven named Smilla Qaavigaaq Jaspersen, her mother an Inuit of Greenland, her father a world-renowned Danish anesthesiologist who fell in love with a beautiful bearskin-clothed Eskimo while doing medical research in Greenland.

Nor is her curious parentage the only oddity in Smilla's history and temperament. She has a degree in glaciology and has published papers in various journals, but Smilla is by nature too rebellious and ornery to hold a permanent job, preferring to use her specialized knowledge about ice and snow on occasional scientific expeditions to Greenland. An indomitable loner and outsider, she feels "the same way about solitude as some people feel about the blessing of the church. It's the light of grace for me." And she runs into trouble whenever some arm of Danish authority tries to force her to conform. Though she is half-Danish and lives in Copenhagen, her deep-rooted loathing for the culture and government and moral climate of Denmark – "humiliating, exhausting, monotonous" – erupts with unmediated bitterness throughout the novel. She gives no quarter, thinks of herself as a colonial through and through, and blames her father for her "loss of cultural identity." And she is as antisocial as a polar bear: "I think more highly of snow and ice than love. It's easier for me to be interested in mathematics than to have affection for my fellow human beings."

When Smilla's six-year-old Eskimo neighbor and friend, Isaiah, plunges to his death from the snow-covered roof of their apartment house in Copenhagen, she refuses to accept the police verdict that his fall was an accident. She knows the child was terrified of heights, and when she examines the tracks on the wintry roof, she is convinced that the boy, running in terror, was pushed. Intrepid as her mother, who was a fearless hunter, Smilla is determined to uncover the truth behind Isaiah's murder, and she soon finds herself in lethally hazardous waters. Probing and snooping, she begins to suspect a vast conspiracy of corruption that is ominously connected with a ship equipped for a mysterious scientific project in Greenland. Undeterred by the danger she is exposing herself to, not in the least from the thuggish crew, Smilla signs on as a stewardess.

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She will unearth the evil truth no matter how terrible the consequences.

As the ship sails from Copenhagen toward the icy caverns off Greenland, Hoeg's story begins to slip ineluctably out of the more or less rational confines of a thriller into the exploitative fantasies of science fiction, complete with mad scientists hunting for supposedly extinct parasites, long preserved in the glacial eternity (along the lines of *Jurrasic Park*). But Hoeg also struggles to ballast his wild abundance of ingenious imaginings with the sober fruits of his voluminous research, and provides us with a dizzying lode of information about glaciers, different kinds of ice, maritime law, cooking, meteorites and asteroids, and a great deal more. It would all become intolerable, for it is certainly more than most of us would ever want to know, were it not for Hoeg's stylistic virtuosity, his prose by turns seductively lyrical, hallucinatory, uncanny in its descriptive magic.

Unfortunately, as the rich stew of mayhem, madness and fantasy comes to a boil in the final third of the novel, the mettlesome heroine we encountered at the start slowly fades away, even as she is being shot at, bludgeoned with marlinspikes, turning black and blue all over. The arresting intensity, the sardonic eccentricity that made Smilla so appealing is overwhelmed by the violent requirements of a "riveting" sci-fi plot. And the end of the story is so murky and impenetrable, so contrivedly opaque and unfathomable, that we long with poignant regret for the opinionated, uncompromising, straight-talking Smilla who beguiled us from the start with her boldly original fix on the world. But she is nowhere to be found. And we are lost in the glacial silence.

It is hard to understand why feminists regard the Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood as one of their brightest stars. Particularly in her recent novels (including that heavy-handed dystopia *The Handmaid's Tale*), her female characters tend to be either sorry, soft-hearted nonentities, or maleficent bitches, with scarcely any figures of redeeming plausibility between these extremes. By now it's quite clear that Atwood doesn't have much use for women – at least, not for the sort of women who believe in love and loyalty, in goodness and friendship and generosity. *Nice* women. What bestirs Atwood's keenest interest and fervently engages her considerable wit and passion is female wickedness, the nastier the better. Atwood has tried to claim in recent interviews that the sort of mad, bad, and dangerous women she's so fond of depicting are signs of a new kind of late-twentieth-century feminism which no longer regards men as the sole embodiments of evil. Women, too, can – should? – be cruel and destructive and more power to them, since, as Atwood remarked in an interview, "Women are tired of being good all the time." Gender equal-

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ity, it would seem, demands a hefty dose of malevolence on the distaff side.

Now, such an idea would not seem altogether off the wall if it had some moral underpinning, if there were some suggestion on Atwood's part that though viciousness exists in both men *and* women, neither sex is ethically exempt. But she has gone out of her way to insist disingenuously that she is not being "judgmental" in her new novel, *The Robber Bride,* though in it the character of Zenia contains the most extravagantly monstrous female Atwood has yet portrayed. "I don't think novels are how-to books," Atwood told *The New York Times*. "They render experience rather than provide billboard solutions to things." But how plausible or honest is the experience rendered in *The Robber Bride*? Zenia is a creature of such unalleviated nastiness, with so copious a repertory of treachery, that we would flee in horror – if she bore any resemblance to women we'd be likely to encounter in the real world of "experience."

As Atwood describes her, Zenia is a sort of endlessly changeable mechanical doll, with her breast implants, nose job, and dyed hair. As one of her victims remarks, "Pure latex flows in her veins." As a fictional character Zenia is constructed not only of latex but of Gothicized plastic, both synthetic. She is more laughable than sinister, as scary as a Halloween pumpkin. Atwood's title derives from the Grimm tale, "The Robber Bridegroom," about a cannibal husband who devours his wives until a Scheherezade-like bride outsmarts him with a dream and a story. While the Grimms' lurid story is genuinely frightening, Zenia the man-eating destroyer is simply preposterous.

The experience Atwood portrays in this "non-judgmental" novel consists mainly of flashbacks to the childhood and young womanhood of Zenia's three principal victims. Tony is a war historian who teaches at the University of Toronto, Charis is a fey New Age nitwit, and Roz, the only character of any substance, is a robust, successful businesswoman. Friends since college, they have all been pushed to the edge by the rapacious temptress who has stolen their men one by one without a qualm, and then discarded them like used Kleenex. While we are told a great deal about the three women Zenia betrays, we learn nothing about Zenia herself beyond the chain of outrageous lies about her life that she has invented over the years. Is this Atwood's way of suggesting that some form of Zenia is part of all womankind, a projection of their own fantasies? It's hard to grasp what she's driving at, but one thing is perfectly clear. At one point of the novel, Roz, unquestionably the brightest of the ill-treated trio, wails that "she feels as if she's been teleported into some horrible daytime soap, with hidden iniquities and sinister intrigues and bad camera angles." Exactly.

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It is highly appropriate that Susan Sontag has provided an enthusiastic blurb for James McCourt's third novel, *Time Remaining*. In her famous essay "Notes on Camp," which Sontag published in these pages in 1964, early in her career as a cultural zeitgeister, she analyzed the nature of camp as a unique and deviant sensibility – its extravagant, playful, anti-serious theatricality; its disdain for moral relevance; its reliance on travesty, impersonation, artifice; its androgynous frivolity. As she pointed out, "Homosexuals, by and large, constitute the vanguard – and the most articulate audience – of Camp." In McCourt's irrepressibly campy novel, which brings new resonance to the manner and matter of such fiction, the dominant voice, drowning out all others, belongs to a retired female impersonator and transvestite ballerina whose stage name was Odette O'Doyle.

In his heyday, Odette belonged to a band of drag queens, the Eleven Against Heaven, which for some four decades was the toast of the New York homosexual cabaret world (the word gay had not yet suffered its later transformation). Odette was the star of the band, and now, as he sighs, "one of the sole survivors," for McCourt has written his campy novel in a time that Sontag could not have foreseen – the plague years of AIDS – a time that has enforced fearful changes in the camp sensibility. The giggly revels of travesty and malice have been darkened by a Totentanz with the funereal finality of a dirge, for Odette's frenetic monologue is not only a grab-bag of gossipy remembrances of gay-dom in the postwar, pre-HIV decades. It is also a book of the dead.

In the midnight train to the South Fork of Long Island, Odette recounts, among many other things, his recently completed mission on behalf of the eight members of the Eleven Against Heaven who have died of AIDS. Over several weeks, he crisscrossed Europe to deposit their ashes in favorite canals and rivers and harbors, as they had requested with their dying breath. Odette's death-haunted monologue wanders erratically from melancholy tributes to the "faggots" (his word) whose ashes he has just dumped, to full-throated invocations of the icons and darlings of gay camp: Bette Davis's haughty Margo Channing in *All About Eve* (one of Sontag's instances); Judy Garland; Mae West (a *female* female impersonator); Truman Capote; scenes from dozens of B movies, with all the bits and pieces of vanished pop culture so dear to the camp heart; lurid details of the Windsors' sex life. And since McCourt has conceived Odette not only as a man of parts, private and otherwise, but as an intellectual – the drag queen as polymath – he also fires off some knowledgeable assaults on Henry James, most contemporary poets, Jean-Paul Sartre, and deconstruction, which he wittily dismisses as "nothing more or less than a

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French reaction to the onslaught of American advertising . . . a cold war to the death . . . between the Ecole Normale Supérieure and the Institut de France on the one side and B. B. D. & O., Hill and Knowlton on the other." But the "erudite" riffs aren't nearly as amusing as the Judy-Margo-Truman-Windsor wisecracks spiked with venom.

Of course *Time Remaining,* with its melancholy bass notes and malicious cackling, is not a novel, though who knows what the right word might be for such an uncorseted, unstoppable romp through the pre-AIDS years of camp culture. It's McCourt's intermittently brilliant, often boring performance of the "melodrama of remembering," as he captures the sadness of lost friends, of happier days gone by, of the vanished fun-and-games, in what Odette dryly describes as "the Jackson Pollock abstract expressionist drip method of storytelling." Though the book is shot through with incandescent moments of hilarity and sorrow, reading Odette's wildly free-associating ramble is like sitting next to a rambunctious drunk on a crowded train. At first his giddy exuberance is wonderfully entertaining, but after a while you wish he would just shut up.

David Leavitt has concentrated so relentlessly in his novels and stories on the one subject of homosexuality that he has become more of a professional spokesman for the gay world than a writer. As a result, his fiction doesn't arouse more than sociological interest in most readers and critics. But his new novel, *While England Sleeps,* though of no intrinsic value as literature, has acquired notoriety that raises questions about literary ethics, and for that reason alone is worth some attention. This issue is one of fact and fiction – or fiction borrowed from previous fact – in short, plagiarism.

The time is the 1930s, the place is England, and the story is primarily about the homosexual love affair of Brian, an upper-class would-be novelist, and Edwin, a ticket-puncher on the London Underground. There's an erection on every other page, and a lot of strenuous buggering. Various Communists have tried to recruit both men into the Party, especially after civil war breaks out in Spain, and Edwin runs off to join the International Brigade. Soon disillusioned, and horrified by the bloodshed of battle, he is imprisoned by the Loyalists for desertion. He summons Brian to Spain, and the two of them escape on a boat bound for Bristol. But Edwin dies of typhoid en route, and is buried at sea. Brian emigrates to America, where he becomes a successful screenwriter, finds true happiness with another gay lover, and so on. But none of this comes to life, in large part because Leavitt's prose is so flat and sententious.

What is arresting, however, is not the story but its source, for as Bernard Knox revealed in a devastating review in *The Washington Post,* the characters and plot of *While England Sleeps* were blatantly lifted from

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World Within World, the autobiography Stephen Spender published in 1948. But where Spender spoke of "friendship" and "paternalistic feelings," Leavitt has laid on with a trowel the clinical and scatalogical details of gay sex. (Even his title is secondhand, since it deliberately echoes J.F.K.'s *While England Slept.*) Furious, Spender filed suit against Leavitt and his English publisher to prevent the book's publication in the U. K. As this is written, the case has not yet come to trial in London.

Of course this is hardly the first time a novelist has appropriated material not of his own devising, nor can we automatically condemn a writer for doing so. What matters is the transforming imagination, the perception and language he brings to that material, making it his own. Merely altering the fate of the working-class lover – Leavitt kills him off, Spender brings him safely home – is not an act of imagination. Neither is the slick superficiality of Leavitt's approach to the political and social climate of England in the mid-1930s: "Now history was pressing down from all sides, and sensibility seemed more than insufficient; it seemed criminal. Soldiers, not writers, determined the fate of the world." What arouses Leavitt's most zealous passion is not "the fate of the world" but the once-draconian laws of England against homosexuality. If there's such a thing as the crotch theory of politics, that is the level of Leavitt's comprehension.

After such simple-mindedness and squalor, Laurie Colwin's *A Big Storm Knocked It Over* is a treasure beyond counting, the last of a series of novels in which she explored the domestic territory that was so distinctly and memorably her own as a writer. The public world outside the boundaries of her private fiefdom is scarcely mentioned in her work: no politics, no social problems, no global turmoil. What fascinated Colwin was the agony and wonder of family life, the way clannish obligations shape an individual's pursuit of happiness, and bear down on the pain and pleasure of love. Few novelists these days pay much attention to happiness: it seems a bland idea (except for those who find it); it smacks of sentimentality; it blunts the sharp edge of irony; it's hard to define and harder still to dramatize. (As Clifford Odets once in all seriousness remarked, "Happiness is no laughing matter.") But Laurie Colwin is neither embarrassed nor intimidated by the possibilities of this eminently desirable but elusive state of being.

In *Happy All the Time* (1978), *Family Happiness* (1982), and *Another Marvelous Thing* (1989), Colwin focused her wit and clear-eyed intelligence on men and women, on the whole likeable and decent, who ought to be perfectly content with their lot but feel that something is missing. Yet they can't quite figure out what it is, or why they are restless and edgy. Most of them are well-educated, well-off New Yorkers, with good

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jobs and comfortable homes, without anything more distressing in their lives, it would seem, than an exasperating mother. Yet they tumble guiltily into adulterous lover affairs without for a moment wanting to break up their more or less contented marriages. As Jane Louise, the heroine of *A Big Storm,* ruminates: "A husband was someone you could hide behind. You could cover your head with a marriage. . . . You could stamp out unnecessary or wayward emotions. You could dispel untoward thoughts. You could pretend that all of your life was all of a piece and it was wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. . . ." (Note the word *pretend.*)

Colwin can be incisively ironic – and very funny – about oppressive parents, pretentious poseurs, and the philandering snakes that crawl into the most orderly gardens, and she harbors no illusions about the price most people may eventually have to pay for their willful self-deceptions. But neither her irony nor her comic sense is tainted with acid. What she captures with finely nuanced precision and generosity of spirit is the way perfectly sensible human beings, seemingly without any cause for anxiety, become fretful about the direction their lives have taken, and berate themselves for their fretting. In Colwin's hands none of this ever smacks of self-pity or self-indulgence.

In her scrutiny of the domestic scene, she is particularly astute about the meaning of marriage and its awesome disturbances. As *A Big Storm* opens, Jane Louise, a successful book-designer in her late thirties, has just been married ("In sickness and in health, and in confusion"), and she can't stop gnawing at an invisible hangnail:

> Had she changed? Was there now some new creature named Jane Louise Parker who was older, wiser, more grown-up? Did married people look and smell different? . . . What an odd thing it was to have a husband. This person who was almost like a household object – a pillow or a lamp – who transformed you from a single entity into a unit, whose breathing at night was as reassuring as a clock, to whom you could, of an evening, pay almost no attention at all, and who in one minute, with one look, could turn into what a husband actually was: a sexual being.

Jane Louise's plaintive agitation about the metamorphoses of marriage stems from her own and her husband's childhood traumas, which make her apprehensive about the giant step she has just taken. Neither of them has entirely recovered from the long-ago rancor of their parents' divorces and remarriages, and when they plan to have a baby, she is tormented by the thought that two "unprepared humans," of unhappy background, "were supposed to create some unswerving, stable, and dependable

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structure. How were they supposed to do that?"

A resourceful woman, this uneasy wife and reluctant mother climbs out of such sloughs of despond through heart-to-hearts with Edie, her dearest friend since college. The blessings of friendship – its compensations for the failures of family, its reassuring mortar of acceptance in a heartless world – play a vital role in Colwin's work. Like happiness, friendship is a fragile gift of life that few novelists bother to write about these days. When the two women give birth only weeks apart, Jane Louise, world-class worrier, asks Edie, "Do you suppose [the babies] will someday not be able to stand us?" Edie has the perfect answer: "Oh, doubtless. But they'll have each other."

The big storm of the title is a real tornado, but it is also Colwin's metaphor for the disruptive, unsettling changes enacted by marriage and parenthood. After the storm, the story ends in graceful tranquility on a country hilltop, as the two couples and their sleeping babies wait for the Fourth of July fireworks to begin – "that unexpected, magnificent, beautiful release, like the unexpected joy that swept you away, like life itself." We tremble, knowing what followed.

Soon after she wrote those closing words of her last novel, Laurie Colwin died of a heart attack. She was forty-eight years old. The loss is incalculable.

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LOUIS A. SASS

The Epic of Disbelief: The Postmodernist Turn in Psychoanalysis

The epic of disbelief
Blares oftener and soon, will soon be constant . . .

– Wallace Stevens, "Sad Strains of a Gay Waltz"

A sea change is occurring in the way many psychotherapists conceive of their work. Members of what might be considered a psychotherapeutic avant-garde have become disenchanted with traditional positivist and realist assumptions. They prefer to think of their activities as analogous to poetry, art, or rhetoric. There is evidence of the belated influence of the "philosophy of as-if": the notion, prevalent in philosophy and the arts since around the turn of the century, that human knowledge, including that of the natural sciences, is not an empirical mirroring but an invention used to bring experience into conformity with various needs and values, and that, given this fact, we might as well exploit the invented, inventive nature of what passes for truth. Many who have adopted such positions argue that, in formulating therapeutic interpretations of a patient, one should strive not primarily for correspondence to external or objective reality but instead for the beauty of internal coherence or the efficacy of maximal rhetorical force, or even toward encouraging the patient to adopt more relativist, self-consciously fictionalist modes of self-understanding.

These developments can be seen as part of more widespread cultural tendencies sometimes described as "postmodernist." They are consistent, for instance, with the views of recent postmodernist novelists and critics who reject the view that literature can provide a privileged perspective, whether of external reality or of inner experience, and who, in the words of Christopher Norris, "accept that reality is made, not found, and that novels had better draw attention to their own fictive devices, rather than trying to pass themselves off as chunks of real-life experience." (Whether such views are truly distinctive of the so-called "postmodernist" art and thought of recent decades, as opposed to involving hyperbolic repetitions of notions central to earlier forms of modernism, is a different and complex issue.)

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In psychotherapy this postmodernist trend, as we might call it, is prevalent across a number of schools and can take a variety of different forms. The Jungian James Hillman, for example, wishes to view psychotherapy as a creative endeavor, akin to the arts rather than to science or engineering. Family therapists such as Jay Haley and Paul Watzlawick have long recognized – and attempted to take advantage of – the ways in which certain construals of human interaction, even entirely fictional ones, can have the effect of transforming the ongoing patterns of interaction themselves. Even some behavior therapists, now emphasizing their pragmatist rather than positivist heritage, have discovered social constructionism.

If the trend is most striking among psychoanalysts, perhaps this is because it is they who traditionally have had the deepest commitment to certain realist assumptions, concerning both the existence of deeply embedded psychic structures (id, superego, the unconscious, and so on) and the relevance of memories from early childhood. (The memories may be of real-world events or of fantasies entertained during infancy and early childhood; the point is that they concern phenomena assumed to have occurred in the past.) Some sense of the significance of these assumptions is conveyed by Mirçea Eliade, who compared the Freudian treatment of early childhood experiences to traditional mythic conceptions of momentous, early events occurring in a primordial era of the gods. By postulating primal happenings of early life, we create a sort of time-out-of-time, an all-important era of essential occurrences that precede our fall into history. This has the effect of creating a set of ultimate referents, a place for our searchings to come to rest, and a way to transform a sense of arbitrariness into feelings of destiny or fatedness.

In recent years, the influential works of the psychoanalysts Roy Schafer and Donald Spence, and the less well-known writings of analysts such as Richard Geha and Serge Viderman, have challenged these realist assumptions, arguing that psychoanalytic interpretations are less discoveries than creations and that memories are more invented than retrieved. In their different ways, all these thinkers emphasize how the demands for linguistic expressibility and narrative coherence that are implicit in the largely verbal psychotherapeutic encounter (as well as in the writing of case histories) tend to impose organization on the raw material of the patient's experience. They believe that, to a large extent, this organization is not already implicit in the material, but that this fact does not hinder such organization from having a profoundly curative effect. The relativistic tone of so much of this writing is apparent in the following statement by Roy Schafer: "A version of the past can only be a narrative about past narratives. And that past toward which we might adopt a fatalistic attitude is not more than one contemporary historical

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narrative that, for certain purposes, we take to be true and final." And Richard Geha, adopting the most extreme position of all, writes that "everything is a manifestation of the aesthetic faculty"; to him, the "psychoanalytic enterprise is totally fictional" and should become "more decidedly a branch of literature."

This transformation of the field's self-understanding might be seen as part of the "flight from history" which Frank Kermode has discerned in the interpretive disciplines in general. There are many who would hail this flight for its presumably liberating effects, among them the French analyst Serge Viderman. Viderman writes that the analyst should give up the vain hope of discovering "a history nowhere to be found," for this "elusive reality . . . imposes inconsistencies prejudicial to the coherence of our theoretical formulations." In his view, the search for historical reality shackles the imagination. It unnecessarily constrains the psychoanalytic encounter, whose true purpose is the active *creation* of meanings, not the discovery of meanings in archaic experiences that, in themselves, "have no structure, no figurable shape." Donald Spence takes a similar position in his elegant and widely praised book, *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth.* Insisting on the inherent difficulty, amounting in his view almost to an impossibility, of discovering the factual truth about a patient's past life, Spence proposes that the therapist should understand his own interpretations as really involving an "aesthetic experience," claiming "artistic truth." It is as if Spence and Viderman were applying to psychoanalysis the defense of artifice which Oscar Wilde once suggested for literature: "As life has no shape and literature has, literature is throwing away its one distinctive quality when it tries to imitate life."

There are at least a couple of different ways of evaluating these fashionable positions and claims. The more obvious approach is to ask about the general validity of the versions of relativism, skepticism, and fictionalism that they propound, to test the internal consistency of these positions and the cogency of their dismissals of alternative conceptions of knowledge. That is not my purpose here, but I would like to say in passing that most of these postmodernist claims, especially the more extreme ones, depend on the naive acceptance of certain dichotomies. The greatest thinkers of twentieth-century philosophy (Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, as well as more recent figures such as Hilary Putnam) have tried to overcome, in their various ways, these dichotomies; for example, those between subjective and objective views of truth and reason, and between absolute certainty and utter skepticism. Indeed, there is something surprising about the excited, celebratory tone with which these recent recyclings of familiar forms of relativism, fictionalism, or idealism are so often received in psychology and

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psychoanalysis, as if they were the *ne plus ultra* of up-to-date philosophical speculation. This is not to deny the value of the contributions the postmodernists have made – in challenging the scientism, objectivism, and positivism of mainstream psychology, in laying bare the procrusteanism of traditional psychoanalytic interpretation, and in calling attention to the role that subjective projection and narrative smoothing do in fact play in the formation of psychotherapeutic understanding.

Let us consider these issues from a second standpoint, concerned not with the validity or truth-value of the views in question, but with their lived consequences, especially in the psychotherapeutic situation. The profound existential implications, in particular the potentially debilitating and anxiety-provoking tendencies that are inherent in modern forms of relativism and subjectivism, have been a major theme in both literature and art since at least the time of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche. Yet despite an avowed interest in the impact or rhetorical force of psychological interpretation, the psychoanalytic postmodernists have largely ignored what is surely one of the most important ingredients of this force: not the actual truth-value of the narratives or other interpretations, but the nature of the patient's *belief* – or lack thereof – in the accuracy of these symbolic representations. For even if one accepts that interpretations can be effective without being veridical, it hardly follows that their effectiveness is independent of the patient's *belief* in their veridicality.

This omission is particularly striking in *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth,* in which Donald Spence never directly addresses the question of the patient's understanding of the issues he raises in his book. Spence concentrates almost exclusively on demonstrating the supposed impossibility of an actual correspondence between the narrative interpretation and the past historical reality, but he never explicitly says whether the patient would or should be made aware of this near-impossibility. Given the extent to which psychology, and psychoanalysis in particular, has permeated our culture, becoming part of a kind of general folklore, it would seem naive to expect that such a fact could be kept secret from analysands or other patients (not to mention the ethical as well as the psychological problems of such dissembling – a kind of cynical shamanism). In any case, Spence's way of describing the impact of psychoanalytic interpretations suggests that, for him, belief in such a correspondence is not terribly relevant, and perhaps would even be counterproductive, for effecting a cure.

Borrowing a notion from philosophical aesthetics, Spence tells us that what is curative is not belief in the interpretation so much as it is the *suspension of disbelief* in its referential truth (which implies, I assume, a

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suspension of the whole issue of either belief or disbelief).* Supposedly, this suspension will allow the patient to "make himself accessible to [the interpretation's] artistic and rhetorical surround" and to appreciate "a kind of linguistic and narrative closure." Also, Spence recommends that therapists signal a hypothetical or tentative rather than factual tone by prefacing their interpretations with qualifiers such as "It seems to me that . . . " or "I wonder if. . . . " He writes that "clinical impact" should be understood to mean "aesthetic experience" – something to which truth (understood as involving referentiality, objectivity, or historical factuality) would be quite irrelevant. Carried along by Spence's graceful prose, the reader never stops to ask whether the patient's failure to believe in actual historical veracity might somehow be problematic, perhaps even inimical to therapeutic improvement.

Spence's aestheticist interpretation of the impact of the psychotherapeutic encounter is clearly reminiscent of the emphasis, common in twentieth-century aesthetics, on the presumed self-sufficiency of the work of art, on its escape from the vulgarity of reference to things existing beyond itself. The writings of Roy Schafer share elements of this kind of aestheticism, but he also stresses another (not unrelated) way in which a postmodernist understanding of psychotherapy could have a salutary effect – namely, by increasing the patient's self-conscious awareness of the perspectival nature of reality and of his or her own role in creating understanding. Thus Schafer writes that a main effect of psychoanalytic treatment should be to help analysands become "more versatile, sophisticated, and relativistic historians of their lives." In a reversal of the traditional emphasis on developing insight into the present as a (previously unconscious) repetition of the past, he stresses fostering the analysand's self-conscious awareness of the role of his own ongoing interaction in creating an *image* or *conception* of the past. "More and more the alleged past must be experienced consciously as a mutual interpenetration of past and present," writes Schafer. "The time is always present. The event is always an ongoing dialogue." Here the emphasis is less on the patient's responding to the pleasing coherency of a narrative or other interpretation, than on appreciating the malleability of what passes for reality, and on the patient's recognition of the constituting role of his or her own story-producing mind.

Richard Geha gives things a slightly more negative, Derridean twist at the end of a recently published article, stressing not the creative so much

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*As I. A. Richards remarks regarding Coleridge's notion of "a willing suspension of disbelief": "It is better to say that the question of belief or disbelief, in the intellectual sense, never arises when we are reading well."

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as the critical – or deconstructive – faculties. Here he imagines psychoanalysis as "an endless interrogation of mind-made worlds that continually deconstructs – if it chooses to proceed – its antecedents." Geha offers the model of avant-garde fiction advocated by the postmodernist novelist and critic Raymond Federman, fiction that will be "the metaphor of its own narrative progress and will establish itself as it writes itself . . . a kind of writing, a kind of discourse, a kind of reality . . . whose shape will be an interrogation, an endless interrogation of what it is doing while doing it, an endless denunciation of its own fraudulence, of what IT really is: an illusion, a fiction, just as life is an illusion, a fiction." For both Schafer and Geha, we could say that, to a very great extent, what is truly curative in analysis is the awareness of the analytic process itself, and this amounts to an awareness of its fundamentally relativist or fictional nature. It is this which reveals the essentially created nature of *all* of reality, thus liberating the patient from his rigidities, from the fatedness that comes from taking too literally what is in fact only the narrative one happens to have been living by. A progressive subjectivization is apparent in Geha's adoption of the common deconstructive idea that any creation, such as a narrative, is fundamentally self-referential – always telling the story of its own creation in a kind of narcissistic display of the fecundity or freedom of the narrativizing mind.

This vision of fulfillment through self-knowledge and self-creation has a powerful appeal, of course. It resonates with some of the deepest yearnings of the modern mind. And it seems likely that this form of enlightenment could indeed be helpful – at least for certain people, with certain kinds of problems and at certain moments in their development. Undoubtedly there are many individuals who suffer from rigidities, from too constraining a conception of themselves or too narrow and impoverished a vision of the past. For them, fictionalism and relativism might well be therapeutic. But what of those who suffer from problems of a different sort – for example, from feelings of emptiness, meaninglessness, and unrelatedness; from the inability to form stable relationships; or from a lack of sustaining interests or continuing goals, values, and ideals? What effect might the postmodernist vision have on these schizoid, borderline, and narcissistic problems so characteristic of our age?

What is troubling about the postmodernists is, then, the wholesale endorsement of aestheticism, relativism, or fictionalism as the truth and the message of psychotherapy, and their nearly complete failure to consider the dark and troubling side of such views. This suggests a certain blindness to the existential ambiguities of human life, ambiguities vividly explored in the modern literary and philosophical tradition from which these postmodernist ideas actually derive.

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Friedrich Nietzsche is, with little doubt, the most important philosophical influence on the various versions of relativism, perspectivism, fictionalism, subjectivism, and aestheticism that have recently been gathered under the umbrella of "postmodernism" (as Geha and many others have acknowledged). Yet it is interesting to note how narrow the postmodernist appropriation of Nietzsche can be, how it tends to ignore certain aspects of this kaleidoscopic thinker.

Certainly there is no doubt about Nietzsche's perspectivist inclinations. They are clearly stated in his firm and continuing opposition to Platonism and all forms of essentialism, which he defined as the "idle hypothesis" that "things possess a constitution in themselves quite apart from interpretation and subjectivity." In a passage from *The Will to Power* Nietzsche criticizes the hypothesis that "interpretation and subjectivity are not essential, that a thing freed from all relationships would still be a thing." At times his views did lead him to advocate attitudes reminiscent of the kind of relativism and skepticism that Schafer and Geha recommend. For example, he favored "unbelief as an instinct" and "an absolute skepticism toward all inherited concepts" and toward the "anthropomorphic error" whereby the mind identifies its own constructs with reality itself. In *The Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche states, "There is *only* a perspective seeing, only a perspective 'knowing'." Therefore, "the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe," the more complete our vision will be. In *The Gay Science* he glorifies the free spirit *par excellence,* the person who would "take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced on maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses."

Yet despite these polemics and this hyperbole, Nietzsche was far from being a wholehearted proponent of such relativist tendencies. He may have believed that truth was more created than discovered, but this did not prevent him from recognizing that it is usually necessary to *believe* one is discovering something in order to make the effort of creating it. As far as I can tell, this point has escaped the advocates of a postmodernist style of psychoanalysis, who simply assume their patients will be as enthused as they are by the prospect of embarking on some kind of aesthetic, relativistic, or deconstructive game.

One can certainly understand the appeal these latter approaches might have for a certain kind of psychoanalyst, perhaps frustrated with the sedentary and distinctly passive nature of his or her work, possibly growing bored with the tedium of the Oedipus complex and the no less predictable formulae of the more recent schools. To such a person, donning the mantle of the creative artist or the aesthete might be a welcome and rather flattering prospect.

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Many patients are likely to see things rather differently. It is, after all, their lives that are at issue. For them, the sheer weight of certain feelings – of frustration or grief, ambivalence or fear – may make the view from these vertiginous Nietzschean heights seem somehow less than relevant. The brute, undeniable reality of certain memories may make such patients less attracted to the idea of merely fabricating stories. We might recall that a narrative, by definition, always refers to events beyond itself. In an historical narrative, as in psychoanalysis, the events in question are assumed to have occurred prior to the telling. The idea of concocting narratives of one's own life, yet not being particularly worried about their accuracy, or their obsolescence in the face of myriad alternative versions, may not be consistent with the essence of the narrative impulse itself (at least as it has existed through most of human history). Certainly there are many to whom such an enterprise would seem rather futile and self-indulgent. Similar problems apply to the potentially self-congratulatory skepticism advocated by Richard Geha. To experience life as a sort of endless labyrinth of interpretation might come to seem rather tedious, if we know in advance that there is in fact no Ariadne's thread, no hidden center, nor even a real Minotaur waiting there to challenge us.

So far I have been describing reasons why the postmodernist approaches to psychoanalysis might fail to be as compelling to patients as they are to their therapist advocates. Clearly, however, these interpretations *have* gained a certain currency. One presumes they have had some impact on the actual conduct of exploratory, interpretive psychotherapy, although it is not possible to say how broad or deep this influence is. It is worth considering another dimension, the kind of influence on the patient or analysand which this stance toward history and interpretation is likely to have. Obviously, the postmodernist advocates emphasize positive effects – liberation, invigoration, the development of flexibility and sophisticated self-awareness. Yet we cannot ignore other, more unsettling possibilities. We might look to Nietzsche, for it is he who discerned most clearly the sources of danger and weakness inherent in these forms of skepticism and perspectival fluidity which, in his view, were so central to the dawning modern age. He suggests the potential for confusion or enervation, and for encouraging a kind of self-questioning, even self-cannibalizing involution as well as a certain narcissism of the mind, phenomena that certainly play more than a small part in the neuroses, personality disorders, and general miseries of our era.

Nietzsche spoke of a "madly thoughtless fragmentation and fraying of all foundations, their dissolution into an ever flowing and dispersing becoming," as among the "remarkable symptoms of our age." He believed that new forms of historical and cultural awareness had exposed

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man to too many different views of existence. Modern man had been blinded by a "hypertrophic virtue," the presence of "much too bright, much too sudden, much too changeable light." As a result, "the lines of his horizon restlessly shift again and again," rendering him incapable of "rude willing and desiring." The fictionalist relativism of Shafer or Geha, in which one would never take one's present self-understanding too seriously, remaining ever ready to move on to a successive self-understanding, risks having this kind of corrosive or debilitating effect, especially for people who already suffer from problems of a schizoid or narcissistic type.

Schizoid individuals tend to sense that their own perceptions, memories, and actions are somehow insubstantial. They feel detached, as if separated from the world by a sheet of glass, and they often become overly preoccupied with theories and abstractions, or with internal thought processes that seem to be idling in neutral. Narcissistic individuals are generally more engaged with the social world, but the transience and self-centeredness of their attachments robs them too of a real sense of groundedness, and, in the end, leaves them also feeling hollow and discontented. What such people require is hardly a greater appreciation of the multiplicity of perspectives or of the element of artifice inherent in all of human existence. This might actually work only to increase the sense of detachment and dissatisfaction that brings them to psychotherapy in the first place.

In one of his most powerful attacks on perspectivism Nietzsche wrote that "the basic condition of all life" is to have a *single* perspective: "And this is a general law: every living thing can become healthy, strong and fruitful only within a horizon; if it is incapable of drawing a horizon around itself or, on the other hand, too selfish to restrict its vision to the limits of a horizon drawn by another, it will wither away feebly or overhastily to its early demise." He criticized those "given over to a restless cosmopolitan choosing and searching for novelty and ever more novelty," the people of an age in which "knowledge, taken in excess without hunger, even contrary to need, no longer acts as a transforming motive impelling to action. . . ." And in a passage that could be read as a critique of intellectual developments in the contemporary world of postmodernist literature and poststructuralist theory, he writes of the age of the "Don Juan of cognition," the person who lacks sufficient love for the things he knows yet nevertheless pursues knowledge relentlessly until, finally, "nothing remains to be hunted but the most agonizing effects of knowing" itself. This is the brother of his despised "theoretical man," who is "bent on the extermination of myth" and "finds his highest satisfaction in the unveiling process itself, which proves to him his own power."

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Many of the dangers of this kind of relativism are illustrated by the character of Ulrich, the anti-hero protagonist of *The Man Without Qualities,* the great modern novel by Robert Musil, who was an avid reader of Nietzsche from an early age. Ulrich, who stands for Musil as a sort of representative modern man, is an exceptionally self-conscious being, ever preoccupied with myriad possibilities and ways of being. A "possibilitarian," he has lived since childhood in a subjunctive mood, once arguing in a schoolboy essay that "even God probably preferred to speak of His world in the subjunctive of potentiality . . . for God makes the world and while doing so thinks that it could just as easily be some other way." The result is a feeling of negative freedom, a constant awareness of the groundlessness of existence. Indeed, Ulrich is so aware of "the leaps that the attention took, the exertion of the eye-muscles, the pendulum-movements of the psyche occurring at every moment" that even the act of keeping one's body vertical in the street seems to him to require a tremendous amount of energy. He cannot forget the importance of perspectives or horizons, nor can he trust his own, for, as another character in the novel points out, Ulrich knows too well that it is always "only a possible context that will decide what he thinks of a thing."

And so it is difficult for Ulrich to make decisions, whether in the matter of furnishing his house or choosing a career; he too easily sees the arguments for all possible choices. Indeed, he loses all sense of reality, for in his hyper-reflexive state, nothing exists "in-itself" but only as an emanation of the viewing mind. There is nothing but a "world going in and out, aspects of the world falling into shape inside a head."

> Nothing is stable for [Ulrich]. Everything is fluctuating, a part of a whole, among innumerable wholes that presumably are part of a super-whole, which, however, he doesn't know the slightest thing about. So every one of his answers is a part-answer, every one of his feelings is only a point of view, and whatever a thing is, it doesn't matter to him what it is, it's only some accompanying 'way in which it is,' some addition or other, that matters to him.

Ulrich's indecisiveness might be considered a symptom of what Heidegger has called "the age of the world-view." This is the era, inaugurated by Descartes in the middle of the seventeenth century and reaching a kind of crescendo in the twentieth, when the world is no longer felt to exist as an encompassing or solid external reality, when it is experienced instead *as* a view – a mere subjective projection whose being derives from the individual human subject or from whatever human perspective or symbolic system incorporates it.

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Ulrich seems to have an acute awareness of his own, personal involvement in these acts of constitution. He senses *his* eye muscles, the movements of *his* psyche, *his* ways of looking at things. Many who have written on the culture and sensibility of the last few decades would suggest, however, that this sense of idiosyncratic selfhood and personal subjectivity is rapidly turning passé and being replaced by the more anonymous sense of irreality carried by the flood of media images that now surround us like an atmosphere. For as we enter more fully into the postmodern world, all seems to pale before the power of the image, causing old distances and distinctions to waver and collapse. The very idea that something real might preexist the image or the simulacrum and remain beyond its grasp begins to fall away. So does the idea of some idiosyncratic or private realm that would be the locus of a true or inner self. Instead of the old pathos of distance, with its sense of inwardness and detachment, the condition of an inner self cut off from some unattainable reality, we enter into a universe devoid of both objects and selves, where there is only a swarming of "self-objects," images and simulacra filling us without resistance.

Mutations like this are never sudden, never absolute, so naturally we find both conditions existing side by side. We find the old existentialist alienation along with the new postmodern hysteria, euphoria, and malaise. That the aestheticized psychoanalysis of Donald Spence remains largely within the first order is suggested by his continuing belief in a real past and "true memories," even at times a yearning for closer contact with it. Spence does assert, however, that like a kind of Kantian *Ding-an-sich,* this formless, unformulable world is virtually impossible to reach: " . . . language is always getting in the way between what the patient saw or felt and the way this experience appears (variously transformed) in the analytic conversation. We never make contact with the actual memory or dream; language is always the elusive go-between."

It seems that Richard Geha, perhaps more fully at ease in the postmodern age, would dismiss all such yearnings for the solid or the unattainable. There is no past, he tells us; it was already only a fiction. Even the mind, what might have seemed to be the origin of all this imagery, turns out to be "a purely mythical site," with only a "fictional status." And this, in Geha's view, should be cause for rejoicing, not for frustration or regret. So, instead of the anguished if rather comical confusion of Musil's character Ulrich, Geha offers us the postmodernist message of the novelist Richard Federman: there is no cause for worry since reality "does not exist, or rather exists only in its fictionalized version." *Mimesis* is but a dream; there is only *poesis.*

The difference between Spence and Geha might be compared to a

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shift between phases in a four-stage progression which Jean Baudrillard postulates in an essay on the postmodern loss of reality, "The Precession of Simulacra." The first of these phases is in a sense *pre*-modern, for here the image (which could include a narrative or any other form of representation) is assumed to reflect a basic reality; it is a *good* appearance, as in traditional, realist conceptions in psychoanalysis. In the second phase, the image takes on evil qualities, for now it is assumed to mask and pervert a basic reality with which we cannot have contact. This corresponds to Spence's sense that the smoothness and clarity of narrative necessarily misleads us as to the fundamental and nearly ineffable complexity of the real unconscious or the real past. In the third phase, the image (or narrative) only *plays* at being an appearance while actually masking the complete absence of a basic reality. This seems to capture Geha's sense of the usual functioning of psychoanalytic interpretations or narratives, which fool us into thinking there is a basic, bedrock reality when in fact there is none. The fourth and final phase, the stage of the simulacrum (the image without an original) is the one Geha would like to foster, for here the image or fiction leaves the order of appearances altogether. Interpretations become transparently fictional, laying no claim to truth since it is universally recognized that there will be only fictions wherever we look.

There is something disturbing about the homogenization of existence implied in this final phase, when all difference between reality and illusion, truth and error, memory and imagination is dissolved. In a famous remark, Hegel decried Schelling's notion of the Absolute by saying it reminded him of a night in which all cows are black. Beneath claims to openness and pluralism, to creativity, diversity, and play, postmodernism may conceal something similar: a veiled absolutism that could deprive psychotherapy of its critical edge and life itself of its density, its ontological weight. For how can a person be encouraged to acknowledge truly unpleasant truths, especially those sordid, unflattering facts which may lack the compensation of a tragic dimension, if one assumes that there is no distinction between truth and mere fiction, only stories about stories about stories? And what is to prevent psychotherapy from turning into an elaborate workshop for rationalization, a place for spinning self-justificatory fantasies and fostering all the subtle complacencies of narcissistic entitlement and self-satisfaction?

Beyond this, there is the thinning or hollowing-out of existence that aestheticism, relativism, and fictionalism can effect, and which may contribute to the "waning of affect" and the loss of a sense of real historical time (on both the private and the public level) that accompany the era of the simulacrum. After all, toward mere images one cannot feel real affects but only "intensities," cold and deracinated affect states such as

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vertigo, the queasy thrill of *déjà vu,* uncanniness, awe and amazement, the euphoria and nausea of weightlessness. Truer, more full-blooded emotions – love, hate, sadness, and simple joy – are debarred, for these require grounding in the lived body, in a feeling of connection with real objects and living human beings, and in a sense of finitude, of finality, and of risk.

Jorge Luis Borges's famous short story, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," contains a fanciful, allegorical evocation of the kind of existence postmodern culture may be bringing about and which postmodern psychoanalysis may be encouraging. This story has sometimes been viewed as a sort of quintessential postmodernist text, not only exemplifying the major themes of Borges's own work but celebrating relativism and fictionalism more generally. Quintessentially Borgesian it may be, but its attitude toward the ideologies associated with postmodernism is certainly more ambivalent than such a reading suggests.

Borges identifies himself as the narrator of "Tlön, Uqbar," and in the story he tells of how this individual, the Borges within the fiction, learned from a volume of a mysterious encyclopedia about the entire history of an unknown planet:

> . . . with its architecture and its playing cards, with the dread of its mythologies and murmur of its languages, with its emperors and its seas, with its minerals and its birds and its fish, with its algebra and its fire, with its theological and metaphysical controversy.

The world of Tlön is exotic in a very special way, however, for it is really a kind of solipsistic or Berkeleyan world, a place where there is only one discipline, psychology, where the inhabitants conceive of the universe as a series of mental processes and of thought as "a perfect synonym for the cosmos." Not only is this land *inhabited* by subjective idealists, it was also *created* by subjective idealists. As the narrator soon learns, the whole world of Tlön was dreamed up by a secret fraternity of hermeticists and nihilists who dedicated themselves to demonstrating "that mortal man was capable of conceiving a world" and who therefore created the *First Encyclopedia of Tlön.*

Tlön is an extreme reflection of the subjectivism central in so much of postmodernism, with its relativist, fictionalist, and idealist tendencies. This is the same subjectivism that has come to pervade the contemporary psychoanalytic avant-garde, where storytelling is given primacy over seeking out the past. We find it also in writers such as Thomas Pynchon, Jacques Derrida, and their epigones, for whom no philosophy can be more than a dialectical game, a philosophy of as-if that attempts, vainly, to

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understand all aspects of the universe in the light of a single one. And in Tlön, reality does in fact seem to depend on mind for its very existence, as can be gleaned from the doorway that disappeared as soon as it was no longer visited, or, conversely, from the ruins of an amphitheater that continued to exist only because of the presence of some birds and a horse. In Tlön the only truly scandalous philosophy is that of materialism, whose assumptions about substance and the continuity of existence are found to be incomprehensible if not completely ridiculous. It would seem that the people of Tlön accept the deconstruction of causality first carried out by Nietzsche and later taken up by postmodernists such as Paul de Man, with its replacement of material by psychological sequence. To them, writes Borges, the "perception of a cloud of smoke on the horizon and then of the burning field and then of the half-extinguished cigarette that produced the blaze is considered an example of association of ideas."

There can be little doubt that the land of Tlön, where not truth or verisimilitude but only the astounding is respected, where all philosophy is viewed as a branch of fantastic literature, is a projection of certain attitudes of its real author, Borges – whose own tastes ran to Poe, H. G. Wells, and the philosophies of Berkeley and Schopenhauer. But it is a serious mistake to understand the story of Tlön as a simple celebration of relativism and idealism, as what Derrida once called "the joyous affirmation . . . of a world . . . without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation." The story's ending, which might even be read as a prophecy of the coming ascendancy of postmodernism, makes it clear that Borges maintains critical distance from the subjectivism and fictionalism of Tlön, and that he cannot so easily dispense with his own nostalgic attachment to the certainties of realism and common sense.

Borges describes how, around 1944, discovery of the full set of the *Encyclopedia of Tlön* precipitated such widespread fascination with Tlön and its ways that the world was soon flooded with editions of and commentaries on this "Greatest Work of Man." People were enchanted by "the minute and vast evidence of an orderly planet," entranced by this labyrinth which at least is "a labyrinth devised by man, a labyrinth destined to be deciphered by men." Indeed, it seems that reality itself yearned to yield and did yield to this new order whose appeal Borges compares, significantly enough, to those very absolutisms – including dialectical materialism and other totalitarian ideologies – with which relativism and fictionalism have been wont to contrast themselves. Unlike the postmodern champions of the philosophy of as-if, Borges does not fail to see that fictionalism or self-conscious subjectivism can be as dogmatic and metaphysical as are the more obvious absolutisms – and that they are, perhaps, as likely to offer a potentially dangerous and ultimately enervating

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sense of security.

In a passage that makes many postmodernist celebrations of freedom and non-presence seem a bit sophomoric by comparison, Borges describes with the necessary equivocation, but not without a certain wistfulness and poignancy, how "the contact and the habit of Tlön have disintegrated this world." He describes how the teaching of Tlön's harmonious but of course purely fictitious history has already effaced the history that governed in his childhood and that had at least the possibility of being true: "already a fictitious past occupies in our memories the place of another, a past of which we know nothing with certainty – not even that it is false."

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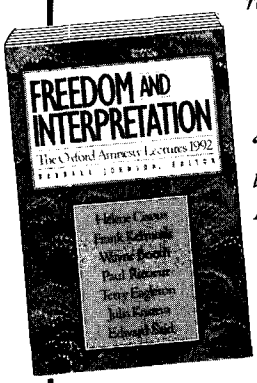

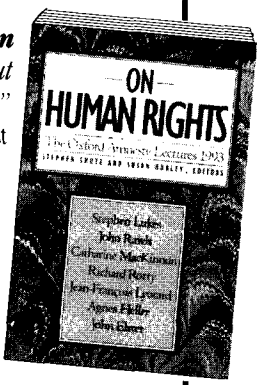

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WOLF LEPENIES

The Future of Intellectuals

In order to be immortal, wrote Karl Gutzkow, you have to blow it big-time at least once. This Vormärz writer was right: intellectuals are to blame for great errors. This, it would seem, is what has made them immortal. Another writer, Leon Daudet, spoke of the nineteenth century as the stupid century. In retrospect – not least because of intellectuals – the last century of the second millennium is unsurpassed in stupidity. But speaking of the end brings us back to life. No sooner had tired Western novelists bewailed the end of literature than potential Nobel Prize masterpieces began cropping up on the periphery of capitalism. No sooner had the end of history been predicted by an American State Department official than history itself began to run wild, upsetting not just old Europe but the entire world as well. No sooner had obsessed intellectuals written about the death of intellectuals than Enlightenment philosophers suddenly reappeared on the scene.

In January 1993 a meeting was held, in Paris of course, that brought together a number of influential intellectuals: writers such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Octavio Paz, and Jorge Semprun; musicians like Yehudi Menuhin and Luciano Berio; the scientists François Gros and Joshua Lederberg; the actress Liv Ullmann and the director Federico Fellini; as well as historians, philosophers, anthropologists, architects, painters, and active and burned-out politicians. In short, forty intellectuals besieged *la capitale* in order to christen a new academy: the Académie Universelle des Cultures. The new academy drew laughter from some, especially those who had once freely associated with the Party. Their mockery, however, was not justified. On the contrary, the founding of the new academy merely proves to what degree the future of intellectuals inevitably resembles their past.

Much can be said about the sophists, those intellectuals of Antiquity, or about the many facets of medieval thought, as Jacques Le Goff has shown. What the founding of the newest Parisian Academy reveals, however, is just how relevant eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers are to us today. We see them as the forefathers of modern intellectuals and view their encyclopedic masterpiece as an early example

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of the successful commercialization of intellectual fashion (see Robert Darnton's *The Business of Enlightenment*). Today, no other text mirrors the brilliance and misery of intellectuals more clearly than the *Encyclopédie*'s very short entry, "Philosophe," written by Denis Diderot, the man who according to contemporaries had read everything. For Diderot, intellectuals were blessed with reason as Christians were with grace. Reason was restlessness; it made the intellectual tick like a self-winding watch. The intellectual groped in the dark like everyone else, but at the same time, he had the torchlight of reason to show him the way.

Diderot's characterization illustrates how the modern intellectual overestimated himself. From the French Revolution onward, especially in the twentieth century – the bloody century of ideologies – this overestimation led to unimaginable errors. It turned intellectuals into propagandists of terror, disengaged masterminds, and henchmen for fascist and communist executioners, all in the name of reason and claims to higher knowledge. Nonetheless, Diderot's definition is also about self-commitment. His intellectual does not live in an ivory tower, and his daily life is not one of exile. Because he knows that humankind can live only in society, he aims to develop fully his own sociability, to make himself useful and pleasing to his neighbors. Civil society is just as commendable for him as an earthly divinity: he knows its principles better than anyone else and sees in its perfection his highest aim. This is how overestimation of oneself is domesticated: propriety requires that the intellectual apply his higher knowledge toward the good of all (at times Diderot echoes Spinoza: he who is an atheist should live like a saint). Thus, the history of modern intellectuals is the history of their own overestimation of themselves. Like every history, it is also an attempt at forgetting. After Diderot, no one bothered to talk much about the kind of propriety that controls the philosopher's ego, making him the guardian of civil society.

During the bicentennial of the French Revolution, Diderot's "philosophe" was again resurrected in Europe. Propriety, personal courage, commitment to civil society, the unshakable belief in the ability of reason to work things through – all these characteristics were embodied in the intellectuals who came to power in the post-communist societies of Eastern Europe. After 1989, one couldn't think of Diderot's quoting Plato – when philosophers become kings, the people will be happy – without being reminded of Václav Havel. For a brief time, no one said a word about the misery of intellectuals and the history of their decline in the era of ideologies. Intellectuals had been decisive in helping to topple the ramparts of the last big ideology – communism. In Czechoslovakia a writer became president; in Hungary it was a Jurist and man of letters. Both the historian Bronislaw Geremek in Poland and the art historian

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Andrei Plesu in Romania seemed to have a voice in determining the guidelines of new and democratic policies. In the East, moralists in the East came to power. The experienced Western experts who busily went about politics "business as usual" paled in comparison. It was expected that the confrontation between moralists and experts would bring about a spiritual uplifting of Europe.

Today, nothing remains of this hope. Not only in Germany but everywhere in Europe, the victorious West has failed in the moment of victory to pause and look within. Socialism has collapsed; a takeover by the market economy and the modern constitutional state is perhaps now only a question of time; the world could become one united, global bourgeois society. Today, however, we are beginning to realize how costly this crippling optimism will be. The illusion that intellectuals can participate in European politics has faded. Václav Havel is again President, but he is now only the largely disempowered leader of a divided land. In Hungary, intellectuals fight among themselves in state and government departments while authoritarian tendencies increase and anti-Semitism is almost respectable. In Romania, nothing remained for Andrei Plesu after a short stint as Minister of Culture in a pseudo-democratic government but to return to a university position that no graduate assistant in Germany would accept.

Bronislaw Geremek's career is characteristic: Solidarity has split and is no longer a political power. His own party, which includes moderates, can, under the best conditions, expect only four to six percent of the votes in the next election. So now he is teaching, having accepted a one-year position as "Chaire Internationale" at the Collège de France in Paris. Naturally, he belongs to the Académie Universelle des Cultures. The intellectuals are coming home. It is no accident that Paris is the privileged place of arrival for this homecoming. In our century, the disappointment over the fall of intellectuals is nowhere greater than in France, especially in Paris. Among the French, however, surprise about this fall has been stronger than the desire to explore its origins. These days, what is particularly visible is the paradox of the "intellectual renaissance."

Take, for example, Bernard-Henri Lévy. In a profoundly provincial book, he lambasts the French intellectuals and their overestimation of themselves. But he also travels to war-torn Bosnia and meets with Izetbegovic. After his return to Paris, he is received by President Mitterrand, who is convinced by his intellectual colleagues to take a spectacular trip to Sarajevo, thereby changing the course of French Balkan policies. Lévy's journal, *La Règle du Jeu,* supports the intellectuals' unbroken claims to influence the rules of the political game.

For a long time it had seemed as though no writer could survive

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intellectual scrutiny, even in France. Not only were Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir openly criticized for their timeless and outspoken efforts to back communism, but their claims of having supported the Resistance were torn to shreds. According to Gilbert Joseph, in *Une si douce occupation*: "those many in France who were imprisoned with Sartre all agree that he showed absolutely no spirit of resistance against the Nazis and that the word 'resistance' never even crossed his lips." As historical monuments fall in France, English-speaking authors like New York University's Tony Judt are also getting even with postwar French intellectuals, paying them back for their anti-American sentiments, which had in fact verged on the pathological (*Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals 1944-1956*). But are historical monuments really falling? One has to wonder, for while French intellectual heroes are attacked by foreigners, there reigns in France a general feeling of solidarity, despite political differences. How can anti-Americanism seriously damage Sartre's posthumous fame in France? Only a few years ago, Jack Lang, then French Minister of Culture, devotedly visited Fidel Castro in Havana, then moved on to Mexico to condemn American cultural imperialism.

In France, unlike Germany, there is more to intellectual collaboration than the moral integrity of individual authors: the myth of the French language is itself at stake. Pierre Hébry, a lawyer in Paris, devoted an impressive book to the subject of literary collaboration (*La Nouvelle Revue Française des Années Sombres, 1940-1941*). The dark years of the famous *Nouvelle Revue Française* were those of the German occupation. In order to save his business, Gaston Gallimard, then publisher, hired the fascist Drieu La Rochelle as editor. When Hébry was invited as the honored guest on Bernard Pivot's popular television show, *Bouillon de culture,* neither he nor the other French guests were able to hide their surprise over the fact that authors belonging to the golden age of modern French literature had accepted the editorship of a declared fascist and had written under his direction. It was obviously difficult for these guests to realize that their heroes of the pen were not superhuman, that most, like so many of their compatriots, had quietly collaborated with the arch enemy (an exception is François Mauriac).

In this debate, so strange yet fascinating for Germans, there were also clear signs of undisputed sympathy for these literary collaborators. When Emmanuel Berl was accused of writing speeches for Field Marshal Pétain, he countered unmoved that he did not see how the welfare of France could be promoted if good style were abandoned. Writing nothing of consequence, to paraphrase Goethe, is for the French always better than writing nothing at all. And he who writes well in the land of readers is forgiven almost everything. Thus it is that the myth of the French lan-

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guage has been closely examined. Rivarol saw not Robespierre but the French language as "incorruptible." Ernest Renan even claimed that reactionary thoughts were inexpressible in good French. The pretentious assumption of self-evident morality in the French language was brought to the brink of absurdity in literary collaboration with the Vichy government. Not only did many authors continue writing during the German occupation, they wrote surprisingly well.

Therein lies the real scandal of intellectual collaboration. One can understand that resistance was weak among French people who no longer wished to identify with the Third Republic. What remains inexcusable is that the French language did not resolutely resist the tempting apple of fascism. If one reads German literature of the same time, it would seem that at least the German language resisted National Socialism. Outstanding German fascist literature does not exist. Ernst Jünger's works cannot easily be classified as good literature; when his political viewpoints became extremely precarious, his stylistic bravura generally tended towards pompousness. Similarly, Gottfried Benn's early enthusiasm for the National Socialist state sinks into unbearable pathos. Only when he began to write for himself again did his mood become cynical – that is, productive – and his syntax glowed anew in its unpredictability. Of course, the German language did not resist. Its greatest authors were banished. German survived in foreign lands, not least because of German Jews, and along with the language, German literature lived on, and to some extent German science. Postwar intellectual life in the Second German Republic profited from this survival. Some of the emigrants came home, running up against those who had remained: fellow travellers, collaborators, and culprits.

Denazification has been unsuccessful. But what is most contestable from the political-moral perspective proves to be an extraordinary advantage from an intellectual point of view. The sharp underlying tensions existing in Germany among members of the intelligentsia are not found anywhere else in Europe. Neither France nor England has been able to foster this kind of intellectual tension, which silently pits Theodor Adorno and Arnold Gehlen against each other. Disagreeing but never directly attacking, they have even paid close attention to what the other is saying. Intellectual life in Germany also benefits from the annexes established by exiles. Phenomenology, like existentialism; Hegelianism, like Marxism; critical theory, like empirical sociology – these survive and change away from home, thereby preserving provocative German intellectual traditions. In the United States, these traditions evoked the wrath of Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*), who saw the Germanization of American thought as the greatest menace to his

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country.

With emigrants passing away – losing Hans Jonas and Leo Löwenthal has made this again evident – the creative tension and internationality of German intellectuals has lessened. Nor is the unification of the two German states any compensation. On the contrary, this unification makes it all the more clear that Germany has simply become a bigger province in Europe. In former East Germany, the intellectual modern age ended in 1933. What is more, the moral advantage held by East German emigrants has vanished since opening the Russian archives. Traditionally drawn to introspection, German intellectuals are also busy uniting the German state, for the most part without confrontation.

These efforts come at the right time for German politics. For while European borders are disappearing, it is important to convince German politicians to bring art and science, culture and intellectual life, into the foreground. At a time when money is short, when it is clear in any case that money cannot do everything, politicians should realize how much can be accomplished in the arts and sciences with relatively little money. Unlike François Mitterrand with the Collège de France, Helmut Kohl probably will not try to develop a traditional German research institute during his remaining time in office. Green with envy, German intellectuals can only look to Paris and to the United States, where President Clinton's "new democrat" is a professor at Yale, Georgetown, or Harvard.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the dream inspired by Enlightenment intellectuals to interpret and change the world already seems to have faded. Napoleon, a man of action and sworn enemy of the "idéologues," had changed the map of Europe. At the same time, industrial production and distribution began to develop its own laws. Engineers were needed to maintain machines and bureaucrats to manage the masses. There was no longer any place for an unproductive intellectual elite which believed that principles could govern society. The result was resignation and revolt on the part of intellectuals. They consoled themselves with the idea that their realm was not of this world. They felt they belonged to a church of the inner order, to a "clerisy" (Coleridge) or congregation of worldly clerics who celebrated the sacramental nature of the mind in shared loneliness. Intellectuals resigned themselves from the world, but this resignation only increased their own overestimation of themselves because it consecrated their theological position. Julien Benda's influential work, *The Great Betrayal* (1927), provided twentieth-century thinkers with a definitive slogan and carried this defiant act of myopia to the extreme. At the same time, attacks against Germany and the German spirit played a central role in Benda's treatise. The na-

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tionalism, shaped by poets and thinkers, that first erupted in Germany during the war of liberation led finally to betrayal by intellectuals; in other words, to their engagement in politics.

In the nineteenth century, intellectuals either withdrew or they rebelled. Karl Marx was a rebel intellectual whose influential work turned the Enlightenment's pipe dreams into political reality. It was during the great October Revolution, so it would seem, that the program laid down by the "philosophes" finally came into being. The year 1917 completed 1789: the intellectuals had at last changed the world too. Their fascination with this event is inconceivable from today's point of view. It left its marks on both the left and the right alike. The murderous ideologies of the twentieth century – here lies an affinity between fascism and communism – seduced the intellectuals to fit reality to utopia. For the intellectual is a handicapped man of action.

In this light, it is significant that right-wing intellectuals in France are now forming a group called "Action Française," while in Germany they go by the name of "Tat-Kreis" (Circle of Action). Both fascism and communism promise to fulfill long-repressed dreams: in the thrill of action, ideas finally become reality. This explains why communism was so long attractive after the fall of fascism. Only one ideology of action remained, and it was towards this ideology that the handicapped man of action, the intellectual, directed himself, whether he agreed with it or not. Rare were those who saw an intellectual challenge in the liberal ways of the industrialized West. In France, Raymond Aron found himself opposite Jean-Paul Sartre. In Germany, it was the liberal political scientist Theodor Eschenburg against Ernst Bloch.

The student uprisings in the sixties were an attempt to escape from the boredom of liberal bourgeois society, which intellectuals did not want to see as the fulfillment of history. With John F. Kennedy murdered, there went the last Western politician whom one could trust to mobilize intellectual political energies. The failure of the sixties rebellion and long period of détente left Western intellectuals feeling cynical. With political options seemingly played out and the threat of a reality check indefinitely postponed, one could intellectually believe in anything and everything. Deconstruction turned into credo, values disappeared, and the canon was rejected. Communism deradicalized itself and became uninteresting from an intellectual point of view. At the same time, state socialism liberalized itself enough to salve the West's conscience and justify its own benevolent noninterference.

The unexpected fall of the communist regimes has been fatal, not only for Western governments but for Western intellectuals as well. Now the "anything goes" philosophy is really in – but the challenge to think boldly must be met in reality. The responsibility of both politicians and

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intellectuals has increased. The task before them is to reflect upon values capable of guiding the world, and to formulate convictions that are livable and instructive for the global market economy. In the face of this challenge, the strategies of retreat followed by intellectuals today loom large. Instead of trying their utmost to fortify the achievements of the liberal constitutional state and support economic policies that regulate the strength of the market by socially peaceful means, intellectuals are retreating from the modern age. Dissemination of their wild thoughts suggests seriously that they are turning the clock back far into the nineteenth century.

Inebriated with the idea of Europe, as today's English-speaking authors are especially quick to point out, the West has lived in the illusion of being able to forge supranational policies in a limited space with world-wide repercussions – all the while forgetting that people need local identities and loyalties in order to live and function. It is true that it was an illusion to think that the nation-state was a thing of the past. While the bureaucrats in Brussels fiddled with regulations to standardize apples in Picardie and Pfalz, the Flemish and Walloons in Belgium consented to change their constitution and to revert to a federal state. We are now experiencing the return to regional loyalties and the rebirth of ethnicity. This will go on for some time, and we will have to live with it.

Precisely because politics throughout Europe is leaning more and more to the right, intellectuals must again define themselves as left. Onward with the Enlightenment! Just as industrial society can exist only through technology and science – some day, it is to be hoped, turning the entire world into a place of meaningful survival – so intellectuals can produce ideas conducive to meaningful life only by critically examining the Enlightenment, not by rejecting it. Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* was written as a warning, not as a final parting. Voltaire and Rousseau, who embodied overestimation and the rejection of reason, both died in 1778. Of the congress in Paris commemorating their life and work two hundred years later, what I remember most is the last sentence of the opening speech: "If I had to choose between Voltaire and Rousseau, I would still choose Diderot."

In order to recognize that the Enlightenment's value for the present has to be weighed carefully, one must be able to read Diderot like the English philosopher, Stuart Hampshire. Diderot was everything but an "idéologue." He had doubts, and in spite of his commitment, he was still uncertain of reason. He asked no more of life or theory than what they could give. His own weaknesses and contradictions amused him. He was not a hero. He valued compromise and made concessions. He believed in the perfectibility of mankind no more than Kant, who thought man was

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carved from crooked wood.

Criticism of the Enlightenment, which is now back in fashion, most often emerges without knowledge of the texts. Diderot read everything, but no one reads Diderot. His programmatic essay on the "philosophe" points to the risks that await the intellectual through the overestimation of reason. But Diderot also shows, like Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers whose work should again become compulsory reading, how this danger can be countered: through decency and commitment, and the attempt to make bourgeois society livable and attractive for everyone.

This is a rather boring task, just as democracy is the most boring way to organize political life. Against popularist politicians and intellectuals drifting towards the right, it is important to support the tedium of the Enlightenment and democracy. And little harm would be done if, instead of publicly grumbling, more intellectuals stayed in their own corners and followed André Gide's example: "I've had enough now with the exchange of ideas, I want to keep a few of them to myself."

Translated from the German by Ann T. Gardiner

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BERNARD SICHÈRE

An Interview with Julia Kristeva

BS: Two features of your second novel distinguish it from the first, it seems to me. Thematically, there was in *The Samurai* a sort of emphasis on the positive aspects of the main character as well as on her intellectual, erotic, and domestic journey, while *The Old Man and the Wolves* brings to the fore a dark, negative dimension, an outlook on the world that is more than pessimistic. The second feature involves form: why is there, in this new narrative, a scrambling of codes and genres (clipped dialogue, allegory, first-person narrative), and such an increase in the variety of voices, so many metaphors?

JK: In connection with what you call negativity, I would refer to Hölderlin's well-known query, "Wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?" and rephrase it by asking "Of what use are novels in times of distress?" The thrust of my new book stems from the conjunction of the personal shock of mourning (the death of my father, who was killed in a Sofia hospital through the incompetence and brutality of the medical and political system) and a public unease – the acknowledgment, which was indeed barely present in my first novel, of a general disarray in a society – to begin with, our own. As a psychoanalyst (that is one of my frames of reference), I am sensitive to the collapse of minimal values and the rejection of elementary moral principles. I found it imperative to choose the form of the novel instead of a theoretical form (as was the case in my earlier essays), because I realized that the novel form was a better way to portray that distress. On the one hand, within the novel form *métaphore* operates, giving form to infantile psychic inscriptions that are located on the border of the unnamable. On the other hand, by elaborating *intrigue* one enacts the dramatic essence of passion, the intolerable aspect of love as it is necessarily coupled with hatred. In comparison, the ability of theoretical discourse to take on *métaphore* and *intrigue* seemed to be far behind the form of the novel. Recent French novels most often reject metaphor and

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avoid drama: "good taste" demands a certain amount of restraint. For my part, I have not ceased reading Proust: "Truth shall arise only at the moment when the writer, taking two different objects, will posit their relation . . . in a metaphor. The relation might be uninteresting, the objects mediocre, the style awful, but so long as that has not taken place, there is nothing there."

The allegorical dimension, for instance, which is indeed central in *The Old Man and the Wolves,* needs to be understood in that context. In contrast to *The Samurai,* my second novel is anchored in a pain to which allegory aims to give significance without fixing it, instead irradiating it, having it vibrate, in an oneiric way, according to each reader's personal framework of ordeals and choices. Thus, the fictional city in the novel, Santa Barbara, might be located in the heart of Central or Eastern Europe, but it also suggests an American megalopolis, or some continental city: it harbors a fountain that strangely resembles the one at the Pompidou Center, and the Oasis Bar in the novel brings to mind a rather fashionable spot in San Francisco. Santa Barbara's very name suggests to me first the surrounding barbarity but also, by alluding to an American television series, the surfeited elements of American society and that vulgarization which constitutes one of the aspects of contemporary savagery. In short, the novel's negative diagnosis first applies to the collapse in the former Communist countries of Europe, but at the same time I did not want to exclude the West, the malaise of our own society.

BS: And the wolves? To what extent does this key metaphor illustrate (beyond its explicit reference to Book One of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) what you have just said?

JK: Those threatening wolves, setting wildly upon their victims, recall the invasion of the Red Armies, the establishment of totalitarianism – my readers in Eastern Europe have had no problem identifying them. More deviously, the wolves are contagious; they infect people to the extent that one can no longer make out their human faces. They symbolize everyone's barbarity, everyone's criminality. They finally signify the invasion of banality, which erases the entire criterion of value amidst the racketeering, corruption, wheeling and dealing.

Nevertheless, making this all-pervasive violence or barbarity contemporary doesn't play off only on the level of the wolves. It also is reflected in the narrative fragmentation in the novel which you mentioned, in the multiplicity of codes and voices. In the novel's Santa Barbara, which is comparable to the declining Roman Empire, history cannot unfold in a naive, indubitable manner, nor can the characters themselves embody

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stable identities. Hence the presence of *Doppelgänger* in the book: the professor and the narrator's father, but also Alba and the other Alba who is discovered drowned. The shiftings in the narrative, the duplication and dissemination of identities, refer to the obvious fact that we are experiencing contemporary culture in a process of metamorphosis. Does it have to do with the return of the gods, as set out by Heidegger? Does it involve another fictional experience, and if so, which one? For the time being we are in a gothic *roman noir*.

BS: But doesn't the book's shift to the first-person narrative, spoken by Stephany, the investigator, change the perspective from the dark, negative dimensions we have just conjured up?

JK: Absolutely. Stephany doesn't play her part on the same level as the others. As soon as she speaks, the oneiric, confused universe of the novel's first section assumes the shape of a detective novel; it means that a crime has been committed and that it is possible to unravel the truth about this crime. A truth-seeking effort takes place, thanks to Stephany Delacour, who will show up again in other episodes, for in the book there are a series of crimes and discoveries in Santa Barbara. The wolves have reason to be frightened: Stephany cannot be easily stopped; she intends to write a series of mystery novels. So the "twilight of the gods" that makes up the first part of the novel acquires a meaning in the second part, which is simply the setting of a course, the shaping of a plot: *it is possible to know*. Henceforth, an ethics of knowledge, let us say, is involved.

Consequently, I feel that to call my novel pessimistic is inaccurate. As long as the investigation is being carried out, the crime is challenged, and death does not prevail. Stephany introduces the vigilance that is the resistant force of life, if not of hope. In the third section of the book, Stephany imposes her diary upon the mystery novel, as a counterpoint. Her subjective experience, her sensibility as a woman, a child, a lover is a veritable counterweight to death and hatred. If Stephany is able to undertake this investigative work and confront crime, it is because she doesn't ignore her personal experience, because she is plunged to a point of rapture, and not without cruelty, into the pain that mourning imposes on us: mourning for her own father, until then repressed, awakens on the occasion of the Old Man's mourning. As a consequence, the character of the journalist-detective introduces a certain psychoanalytic tonality in the book. Without this interior space sculpted out by mourning but given shape by other erotic upheavals – for mourning is an eroticism full of undulations, without the smooth visage of joy – no working out of truth is possible. No investigation, no knowledge. Some base their esthetics, for

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example, on Goethe, others on Rousseau, or Rimbaud; I consider myself a contemporary of Freud. A possible wager: What about a novel that would be cognizant of Freud? Is such a novel possible? Would it attract readers? For my part, it is enough that the novel be disturbing.

BS: The barbarity you alluded to earlier seems to me to be essential. Part of the opposition your book has encountered, I'm sure, has to do with its illumination of what is unbearable in our society, with people recognizing themselves. As I was reading the book – and what you have just said confirms it – I found two images of barbarity; criminality, violence, on the one hand, and on the other what you have termed "banality." Could you tell us a little more? To what extent does this duality reflect the distinction suggested by Guy Debord in *Commentaire sur la société du spectacle* between the "integrated spectacular" germane to the Western democratic societies and the archaic survival of tyrannic forms which, a short time ago, characterized Communist societies?

JK: *The Old Man and the Wolves* is set in Santa Barbara – a city that also evokes the violence of our own societies, their racketeering and delinquency. At the same time violence has become banalized, a trivialization that is no less frightening. The psychoanalyist detects it in the speech of certain patients. We are basically dealing with the image of a *depression* that integrates aggression but under the ruinous guise of an erasure of meaning. That is what I depict in the character of Alba. Alba is one of those depressed persons who considers herself to be "void of meaning." She views her actions as neutralized, impossible to describe, even in the extreme, murderous facets that they might exhibit. A true depression of meaning itself takes place, and the insignificance into which the melancholy person sinks is not merely an individual, "pathological" occurrence. Because of its amplitude, it assumes the seriousness of a societal event, a civilizational crisis.

I should like to add something about the nature and the extent of that crisis. I have just come back from Moscow, where I gave a series of lectures at the French Studies Institute in Moscow's Lomonosov University. I was struck by the pervasive crisis over there, the way in which it seemed to be the very realization of the crisis I portrayed in *The Old Man and the Wolves*. I recognized Santa Barbara. No one any longer respects authority; no one any longer occupies the seat of power, particularly in the university, where there are students but no semblance of rules and regulations; and no one is in charge. I am puzzled by contemporary studies of Soviet or Russian society that, knowingly or not, minimize the extent of the catastrophe, which is not only economic but also ethical.

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In the face of such general decay, there is at the moment a massive regressive return to religion, which affectively serves as a solace but also a way to flee reality. The French Institute, which, on the other hand, enrolls a large number of very qualified and critical-minded students who are eager to learn, constitutes a fortunate exception in that landscape.

Basically, the most disquieting symptom, here as well as over there, the major consequence of which I have called banality, is the tendency that could result in a loss of interest in the psyche. In Western societies today, the most common temptation is to prescribe medicine to appease people's anguish rather than guiding them to confront the pain of living.

In this respect, I refer, in *The Old Man and the Wolves,* to Hölderlin's *Der Tod des Empedokles* ("The Death of Empedocles") and *Mnemosyne,* from which the Old Man explicitly quotes, to the waning of the gods which arouses in the old man a strange mixture of nostalgia, doubt, and fear. On the other hand, Alba in her own evil fashion takes up a theme dear to Heidegger: the "protective heed" provided by being. Alba perverts that heed. She believes the paroxysmal conflict carried to the point of hatred is the only truth. That is her very own punctilious nihilism. She hates without feeling guilty, she ends up untouchable, "at home," proud within the supposed truth of her hatred. That is the dreadful part of it – the unscathed conscience, with neither unease nor hardship, present at the very core of hatred, which might go as far as murder. Within the reverberations of Hölderlin and Heidegger, to whch the Old Man and Alba harken again, the insistence of the question remains. In opposition, what strikes me in today's world, and this is why I speak of the loss of interest in the psyche, is the feeling that the very possibility of questioning has been closed. We have become unscathed in evil just as one might have been immaculate in love.

BS: You have just talked about your bleak impressions of Moscow, which suggest the state of the whole former communist bloc. What strikes me at the same time in this picture of Russian society is the absence of any reference to what has been for years the work of dissidents. Have they disappeared through a trap door? Don't they have anything more to say? Must one conclude that their historical role has come to an end and that their ethical values could not possibly constitute a frame of reference today?

JK: I have no global hypothesis, and there exist without doubt several partial answers. On the one hand, these dissidents fought essentially for Western values, such as democracy and the rights of man. The current regime presents itself as defending and embodying these values and would

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seem to be rendering yesterday's struggle out of date. At the same time, it is clear that we are not witnessing over there the triumph of economic and moral principles being loudly proclaimed, but instead widespread wheeling and dealing, passivity and incompetence. Democracy has not yet been born, and what claims to pave the way for it isn't accceptable. So people wonder what is to follow the destruction of totalitarianism. And more basically, whether this is truly a renewal or only a masquerade of the old, a ruse. The former dissidents seem puzzled. Listen, for instance, to their doubts concerning the factitious coups: Is the old regime really dead, or is it masquerading under a new *nomenklatura* more smoothly attuned to the image-making process than the previous one, greedy for money but yet incapable of creating it and managing it?

Having said that, we also have our own responsibilities. We must depict and try to think through the unraveling of the social fabric of the East, which the Spring 1991 issue of *L'Infini* reported on. Did the media follow up? Of course not. They told us not to interfere in "the process." But who can grasp the meaning of this process? Finally, we must remind ourselves that we are not immune from peril, not penned up in a small protected space. What goes on over there concerns us very closely, if for no other reason than that we shall be called upon to pay for it – financially and morally – for the sake of European solidarity.

BS: In your novel, the Professor is a strong and moving character. He is simultaneously called the Old Man, Septicius Clarus, and acts as a *Doppelgänger* to Stephany's father. He is as complex as a Latin scholar (why Latin, by the way?), at the same time skeptical, ironical, and troubled; a figure of the ethical resistance worried about his impending death; a referential third party to the disciples Alba and Vespasian; a wise old man, a paternal, loving image for Alba.

JK: Why a Latin scholar? Aside from the fact that my father was one of those cultured people who could express themselves in Latin (ridiculously pretentious, wasn't it!), it seemed to me that, more than Greek culture, the culture of the Roman empire just before the advent of Christianity was already in harmony with our own. With Ovid, Suetonius, and Tibullus there was a modern, Christ-like sensitivity that echoes our own anguish. I might also add that I summon up Latin culture and language as a way of calling attention to French as an endangered language. For there is a withering away of language just as there is a general withering away of culture, perfectly clear to you and me, as members of the teaching profession.

What I am suggesting here may appear quite ambitious, coming from

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someone who is a foreigner, a migrant. But it seems to me that in the face of a deep crisis in language, there are two possibilities. The first consists in turning back toward tradition in a loving, proud, reactive, nostalgic fashion. The other, which I uphold in this novel, is the grafting of what comes from another culture, another mentality, onto the language I adopt and which I assume welcomes me. In this case, it means grafting onto the body of the French language and syntax an experience of sorrow and hurt that originates elsewhere and is perhaps liable to awaken other effects.

BS: Could we return to the Professor as father figure? Such a figure, of course, cannot be dissociated from the work of mourning that the daughter (Alba or Stephany) must carry out after the father's death. But what kind of mourning is it? And what ethics emerge out of it?

JK: The theme of mourning is central, and the Professor is foremost a father in the novel. A father's love and love for the father does not constitute a fashionable theme, since every contemporary artist who wants to be worthy of the name begins by defiling the father. Can you imagine? A likable father? Nevertheless, love for the father is not only an antidote to the barbarity of the novel's Santa Barbara but also an experience that Stephany lays bare with a certain lack of modesty, as if it were the secret, not always an idyllic one, of her passion for life, her combativeness. For what makes Stephany Delacour run? Sensuous and indecent as they are, her dreams tie her to an Old Man – the Professor, the Ambassador, who knows? – who is far from being a master, even less so a hero, but who remains an enigma at the very bottom of a sea of insignificance or brutality. This orphan, suffering, uprooted father is certainly an image of the law. But it is neither a stern law nor an abstract law. The Professor is not a superego; he is a man endowed "with a body" who is present with the full weight of his psychology, his affects, his fears. A rebel, if you wish, and at the same time a man of sorrows, in a certain way a Christ-like figure. What needs to be done under these circumstances is to prepare a place for a possible law, and I might also say that it involves new images of atheism that fit the situation we are experiencing, at the end of a world.

BS: You have written about a similar father image in *Tales of Love* and notably about his humanism. It was already that of a traveling, skeptical scholar who embodies what you sketched out in *Strangers to Ourselves*. It accords with a humanism that doesn't belong in the realm of principle or idea but is embodied in a singularity. The most profound message the dead father appears to transmit to his daughter lies in this realm: "Don't

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give in where your singularity is at stake."

JK: Absolutely, but this message is precisely the ethical message of psychoanalysis. In a manner even more singular, Stephany writes that she is "a detective in search of emptiness." "The emaciated hand still holds the stiletto and I make out the word 'Nada.' Nothing. Nothingness crept into me with the smile of a father whose pain made him sing. I am nothingness." And again, "Atheism, which is said to be inaccessible to women, who are always in quest of illusions, that is, of a father-mother lover, opens up for the one who is inhabited by the desert bequeathed her by the dead father. The choice is henceforth restricted and dangerous. Seeking childhood – a kind of madness. Or wandering – independence played over and over again."

BS: What strikes me about the couple Alba and Vespasian is both the extreme violence that is brought into play within them, a potentially criminal violence, and at the same time the violent image of the man as presented by the woman, without her removing herself from the picture, so that as a result we have a reduction, through fiction, of two singular symmetrical manifestations of violence.

JK: With respect to "the couple," as to all the other configurations in the novel, the bottom line is to know whether fiction can aim for truth effects (this obviously implies that it take charge of the death drive and its expressions), or whether it should, on the contrary, reassure us by reinforcing some communal illusion. "Always protest against the domestication pact," says the Old Man. I have obviously chosen the first alternative. Vespasian not only stands for a caricature of masculine violence; he is also an individual without inner life, almost psychotic, "either an active monster or monstrously insigificant" – one can't tell which. You have surely met people who are like that.

In opposition to a certain kind of feminism that idealizes the victimized spouse, Alba doesn't give in to Vespasian and his destructive, murderous tendencies. Moreover, the story of this imaginary couple comes close to assuming in its entirety what I happen to have heard from the couch, for instance about murder wishes and attempted poisonings. Quite simply, the novel tells what one most often conceals. We thus encounter once more the question: can a novel tell the truth? If so – and this has nothing to do with "being seduced" – who can accept that truth without feeling unmasked, betrayed, exposed? Must we then consider a metamorphosis of the novel? Not really. Police investigations, mystery thrillers make the unveiling of cruelty plausible, almost bearable. That is why I intend to pursue the mystery genre – a game. A way of continuing analy-

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sis. Following Freud, Lacan reminded us that the truth of love lies in hatred. An ethics of the written word implies that one should become aware of hatred, and psychoanalysis is also and perhaps foremost the analysis of hatred.

BS: In what way do you think one should bear witness to those ethical components that are at the core of your novel and at the core of your own discourse? Is this the *raison d'etre* of today's intellectual? How do you envision the intellectual's intervention in the face of violence and the banality of evil?

JK: It seems impossible to me to hold a discourse that ignores negativity. We must free ourselves from the consensual ideology that surrounds us, from the deceitful putting forward of a rallying discourse that is being called for everywhere in order to get rid of "problems." Up against such a general condition, which I recently described as a "national depressive syndrome," I don't believe it is appropriate to seek a reassuring discourse that would take over from the "positive" discourse we have known, which was Marxism. I should like to pursue this further in order to answer your question. I believe it is more than ever necessary to examine seriously, in opposition to moralizing, euphoric discourses, the theoretical work that we earlier engaged in at *Tel Quel*. You spoke of this work in your book, *Eloge du sujet*. Others have attempted to stigmatize that work with such terms as "structuralism," "theoreticalism," or even "antihumanism." Actually, it was a critical, not a nihilistic discourse, as some tried to argue. It seems that people claimed to have been terrorized by what we stated then, and I am ready to believe that. They were terrorized less by technical language than by a critical, cleansing, undermining will that in truth they recognized. How does one dispose of such demystifying technique? By embracing the world created by the media or the empty discourse of hope. I feel that it is harmful, even criminal, to keep illusions going, for this amounts to encouraging new pitfalls. One mustn't be afraid to disappoint, if that is the road to knowledge and truth, in the face of the "national depressive syndrome" I spoke of. The analytic, relentless position that I uphold is preferable to the manic rehabilitation of depression under the guise, for instance, of nationalistic fundamentalism or the soporific television rating games.

BS: Doesn't that imply that an intellectual should be less cut off from reality, less ensconced in a superb solitude?

JK: Something like that. My "commitment," a very microscopic one, is

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to analytic listening. It seems to me that we are surrounded by a sea of distressed persons, but they are given no representation. They are not represented where true power resides – beyond politicians, who have less and less, and of course beyond intellectuals, who have none. Psychoanalysis is indeed a privileged listening post, but one should invent and diversify listening posts in order to compensate for the general deficiency of the symbolic markers we are talking about. Consequently, the analyses we are able to produce, that I produce for my part on the basis of my clinical experience, could be put to practical use, doubtless not by media intellectuals, the stars of the system, but by those I might call "basic intellectuals," those who play their parts in educational centers, schools, mayors' offices, and new microspaces that need to be opened, to be invented. It is in that direction that one should give a concrete extension to the ethics of listening, an ethics which would be different from the militant ethics resting on a deceitful discourse.

BS: What precise place do you allot to psychoanalysis in that sphere, and, as you see it, what is the status of the psychoanalytic movement?

JK: One hears people say that psychoanalysis is dead, and in some ways they are not completely wrong. Many psychoanalysts and analytical societies are in the process of self-destructing, both in the guise of a too-dogmatic obedience to the letter of Freud's text and of sectarian splinterings around the remains of Lacan. In spite of that, however, there exists a living, fruitful psychoanalytic discourse, and such a discourse is aware of unavoidably competing and conflicting with two contemporary trends. The first of these is inflated media growth; one now witnesses a takeover of the analytic language by the media, with all this implies in psychic laziness, fleeting narcissistic mirages; at the same time there is a careful shunting aside of the reality of suffering and the necessity to confront such suffering with a full knowledge of the facts.

The other trend is the inflated growth of the neurosciences. One should not of course reject the knowledge gained from those sciences; one must learn to work with them. But it is absolutely appropriate to resist some of the things that have been propagated, such as the pharmaceutical bombardment of individuals to the extent that their individual responsibility is taken away. Everything concerning the "soul" is being ignored, and by "soul" I mean that psychic space whose protection and creativity lie at the heart of Freudian thought. This is where psychoanalysis appears to me to still play a part today, involving both resistance and awakening, and in protecting culture or what is left of it.

BS: We have spoken of the intellectual and his role without directly

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mentioning the political dimension. The intellectual you speak of, should one call him "left-wing"? Does that phrase have a meaning for you? Are you, are we, on the left?

JK: One can't brush that question aside, but the answer is far from simple. Such a bipartition, such alternating between two political and ideological poles, the "left" and the "right," has long been a safeguard of our democracies, but I believe that it no longer plays that part. What strikes all of us is indeed the massive *disinterest* in the political game on the part of citizens, particularly the fact that they no longer care to vote. Even more so, politics to a large extent has been reduced to a technocratic setup that allows a political personality to call himself or herself "responsible but not guilty" – and this means that all subjective and moral dimensions have been reabsorbed, eliminated, by the inexorable march of a bureaucracy which is more and more anonymous and responsible to itself alone. There are no more culprits, just as there is no crime in Santa Barbara: since good and evil don't exist, total bureaucracy, another version of totalitarianism, has trivialized and animalized the human.

Read *The Old Man and the Wolves;* Santa Barbara is where we are. Nevertheless, I would tend at this moment to maintain the distinction you have made between left and right by giving it a particular content. In the history of the West, left-wing thought seems to me linked to an ethical requirement that includes at the same time the dead ends of revolutionary movements and the Terror and the lessons to be learned from such dead ends. Basically, I am not concerned with giving the idea of the left an objective meaning in itself, starting from such and such a content or principle. I would rather define "the left" as the locus where the question of politics, and above all of the limits of the political (from the viewpoint of symbolic formations, that is, the acquisition of culture and knowledge), can be formulated and dealt with.

One would obviously need to say much more and ask the following question: what should be, today, the appropriate political approach to social welfare policies or to the practice of democracy? It seems to me that the traditional practice of democracy through a delegation of power to political parties, which goes back to the traditional model of voting in the Greek city-state, is no longer the most appropriate or efficient representation, when faced with the speed and efficiency of media coverage, on the one hand, and on the other the polymorphism of the individuals that make up our societies.

BS: I had a specific point in mind: To say in what manner we are in spite of everything "left-wing" – isn't this particularly a way of resisting such a

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vague free-for-all which uses the collapse of the communist world as an excuse for expressing hatred of all people's liberations and engaging in a rather disturbing witch-hunt?

JK: One hunts all kinds of witches. If not Heidegger or Céline, it is Marx and the deluded auto workers of Billancourt. Santa Barbara, the city of *The Old Man and the Wolves,* is the city of resentment, at the antipodes of thought. Certainly, new forms of political life need to be invented on the basis of a genealogy of the present form of political life (particularly the two-party system). But isn't the part of the *writer,* as distinguished from that of the "intellectual," as it has always been in the past and today is more than ever, one of defining this political realm in order to reinvent it continuously, even to circumvent it? In order to conceive, utter, and describe unusual, free, and strange bonds between irreconcilable individuals? Writing is an anarchic act, obviously redeemable but desperately obstinate. Writing is not aimed at the *political* man and woman but at their *being*. Nevertheless, it is precisely from the realm of being that the unconscious disrupts the civilized spectacle and reveals us as barbarians, prey to death. The Old Man had that vision, and he died of it – unless he was murdered.

I am a part of his story.

Translated from the French by Leon S. Roudiez

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KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

Since the end of the Matisse retrospective, out-of-town visitors have again started asking for advice about exhibitions in New York. The obvious answers have ranged from the Verrocchio that spent the summer at the Metropolitan to Rebecca Horn at the Guggenheim, and most recently, Miró at the Museum of Modern Art. But during the same period, there have been more arcane pleasures: exhibitions by significant but infrequently seen artists, such as Dorothy Dehner at the Katonah Museum of Art (mid-June through Labor Day), Charles Burchfield at the Drawing Center (June and July), Leland Bell at Salander-O'Reilly (October), and Jacob Lawrence at Midtown-Payson (mid-November through mid-January). You can be sure I recommended all of these.

Dorothy Dehner, who is not quite two years younger than this century, has been making art for most of her life and exhibiting regularly since the early 1950s. The Katonah show, subtitled "Sixty Years of Art," was the most comprehensive of a growing number of recent exhibitions devoted to her work. This increased attention has something to do with feminist scholarship and with the fascination Dehner exerts as an articulate witness to the formative years of Abstract Expressionism, but as this show makes plain, Dehner's work is rewarding for its own considerable merits – which is not to discount the vivid testimony it provides of the preoccupations of New York artists at a pivotal moment in American modernism. Her quirky, anxious drawings explore intensely personal territory: what it meant in the 1930s and '40s to be young, beautiful, intelligent and female, to be an artist and the wife of David Smith, to live in virtual isolation on a spartan farm above Lake George. Dehner's inventive, surrealizing images are often similar to Smith's of the same period – they were together from the mid-1920s to about 1950 – and indeed, the connection between the two artists during those years added a layer to the show. If you were familiar with Smith's work, you recognized common images and sources, used to suggest vastly different moods and meanings; a fossil bird studied by the young couple at the Museum of Natural History, for example, recurs as a threatening, spiky presence in several of Smith's sculptures, while in Dehner's drawings it floats and twists above a barren landscape as an emblem of helplessness and frailty.

Dehner began to make sculpture only after she separated from Smith,

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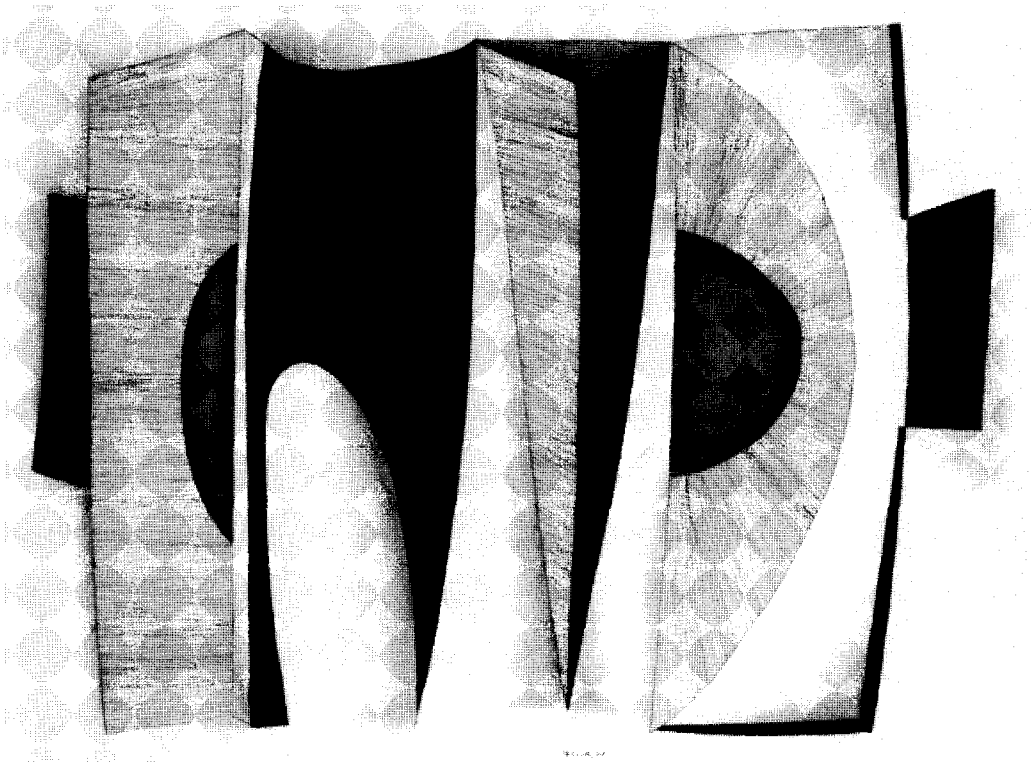

Untitled (1978) by Dorothy Dehner. Wash, pen and ink on paper. Courtesy of Katonah Museum of Art.

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although many of her early works on paper suggest that she long thought of her drawings as "portraits" of three-dimensional presences. This dialogue between two and three dimensions persists; totemic vertical constructions and pierced "walls" and "screens" all have a graphic clarity and a slenderness that corresponds closely to Dehner's drawings, with even the most substantial planes and chunks stacked, strung, and angled to describe complex open forms. Most recently, Dehner has consciously turned to earlier drawings as the basis for a group of fabricated steel sculptures, translating delicate linear lines into sturdy constructions, happily with no loss of personality or energy.

Although she has grown frailer in the last decade, Dehner has been producing some of the most adventurous, vigorous sculpture of her career. Seeming obstacles have become advantages. Failing eyesight obliged her to simplify and scale up her work, while working with fabricators seems to have elicited increased clarity and firmness from her. Most impressive, though, is the sense of overwhelming *feeling* that pervades all of Dehner's work, from the haunting gouaches of the 1940s to the fabricated steel constructions of the 1990s. (If you are in Washington, D.C. in January and February, you can catch the Dehner retrospective at the Corcoran Gallery.)

Charles Burchfield: The Sacred Woods, organized by the Burchfield Art Center, Buffalo, to commemorate the centennial of the artist's birth in 1893 – he died in 1967 – will tour the United States until May 1994. Burchfield is one of those puzzling, seemingly peripheral figures whose work nonetheless encapsulates some of the central issues of American art. His mystical pantheism, his desire to reveal the transcendental in the natural, are not only bound up with the odd conjunction of modernism and the occult peculiar to the early part of this century, but they are also related to conceptions of the sublime that deeply engaged his nineteenth-century ancestors, perhaps most notably the painters of the Hudson River School. Burchfield is puzzling, too, because his paintings can appear formally advanced, as though their maker were fully aware of the concerns of his most ambitious, inventive contemporaries, and at the same time naive, as though he were unaffected by modernist models, or else indifferent to them.

The Sacred Woods offered clues to some of the eccentricities of Burchfield's style. Some early drawings revealed his striving to make single, charged images evoke a host of wildly divergent natural phenomena – clouds, claws, and seedpods all in one, for example. Others traced his effort to invent a set of visual equivalents for what he called "abstract thoughts." (I kept thinking of Kandinsky and Klee and their treatises on the meaning of lines, directions, shapes and colors.) Once alerted to the

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precise significance Burchfield attached to certain configurations and patterns, you can easily track his "discovery" of such forms in the world around him, in foliage or bark, masses of branches or rows of trees. His most successful works, however, are usually less didactic, expressing a kind of all-pervasive life-force. Everything becomes animated, charged; faces lurk in the landscape, plants reach out like hands, even buildings and telephone poles share in the universal unrest.

Burchfield's landscapes can be mysterious and a little scary, like the transformations in Fellini's films – that hedge in *Giulietta degli Spiriti* that turns into a row of hunched, shuffling nuns, for example. He also risks crossing into a zone of cartoon-hysteria, dangerously close to a Walt Disney image of Halloween. Happily, the show at the Drawing Center offered us Burchfield at his best, an ecstatic visionary, moving in close to suggest a tangle of undergrowth, insect population and all, backing off to deal with big elemental events of sky, clouds, night, and blazing sun, searching for equivalents not only for the appearances of nature, but for its sounds, its motion, its smells. It becomes increasingly clear that Burchfield perceived nature neither as benign nor simply pleasing to the senses, but rather as something immensely powerful, constantly mutable, and capable of overwhelming humankind with its unstoppable, awesome fecundity. Burchfield's pictures may sometimes teeter on the brink of kitsch, but at their best they have a raw loopiness, an uncanny excitement that sets them apart. (This is strangely at odds with the usual polite associations of his preferred medium of watercolor, which may add to the impact.) You could categorize Burchfield as an amiable, oddball modernist, especially if you concentrated on his quasi-Fauvist early works, but *The Sacred Woods* introduced us to a darker, more complex artist, not a pastoral poet but one who aspired to the epic, for whom the Sublime was close to the Terrible.

Although his assured, generously scaled figure painting could not be more different from Burchfield's agitated landscapes, Leland Bell is similarly difficult to categorize. Bell, who died in 1991 at the age of 69, was preoccupied for decades with an effort to paint heroically conceived figures engaged in some sort of narrative, with the rigor and clarity of the most high-minded geometric abstraction. It's a daunting, perhaps even impossible program, and the results have been both idiosyncratic and unforgettable. Bell's figures can seem at once ample, fleshly, and trapped in a scaffolding of highly intellectualized abstract structure. His color can be abrasive, while his near-mechanical black outlines and even-handed, uninflected paint-handling can seem deadpan to the point of anonymity. Yet his pictures are utterly absorbing and, at their best, very beautiful in unexpected ways.

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Winter Moonlight (1951) by Charles E. Burchfield. Watercolor. 40 × 33 inches. The Roland P. Murdock Collection, Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, Kansas. Courtesy of the Burchfield Art Center.

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The Salander-O'Reilly show brought together some of Bell's most ambitious and best works, primarily from two series: one, groupings of half-length figures around a table (often portraits of Bell and his family), their attention riveted by a butterfly; the other, the *Morning* series, interiors with male and female nudes, startled by a cat with a dead bird. Bell presents us with private rituals and family anecdotes, elevated to the status of classical myths and treated with according solemnity. At the same time that we admire the amplitude of his conception, the way his figures claim the entire space of the canvas, the way he varies poses – even that of the cat – evoking different classical prototypes each time, he makes us ask whether these are the only stories with any resonance for a painter of his generation. I like Bell best when he relaxes his insistent, diagrammatic outline and reins in his harshly contrasting colors, but I am completely absorbed even by the pictures I like least. I'm impressed by the audacity of their ambition, their desire to reinvent the legacy of Western painting in modernist terms, and I'm engaged by their formality. Bell's obscure narratives unfold in slow motion, their imagery repeated but slightly altered from picture to picture. It's like watching a classical French drama performed by a Noh troupe – not that there is anything orientalizing about his approach. It might be more accurate to say that Bell ceremoniously introduces Mondrian to Titian, and makes us believe that they have a great deal to say to one another.

Jacob Lawrence's exhibition at Midtown-Payson was long overdue. Although his work has been widely shown in museums and galleries across the United States since his debut at age twenty in a 1937 exhibit of the Harlem Artists Guild, this is his first New York showing since 1987, when the Seattle Art Museum's splendid retrospective came to the Brooklyn Museum. Lawrence's themes have remained quite consistent over the years: moments from African-American history and from everyday existence, images of a continuing struggle for equality and justice, and celebrations of domesticity and street life, of work in all its forms, all presented with the stop-time immediacy of modern-day icons.

The Midtown-Payson show combined recent temperas and gouaches with earlier works – including eight searing little paintings from 1983, illustrations for John Hersey's terrifying *Hiroshima* – making it plain that however faithful Lawrence remains to his fundamental convictions, his ways of presenting them have altered considerably. In contrast to the exhibition's often somber early works, for example, Lawrence's recent pictures pulse with a jazzy orchestration of saturated hues – reddish browns, Sienese pinks, and a range of unnameable blues and purples, sparked by orange-red. Where earlier compositions were hieratic and centralized, recent pictures spread across the surface; figures move more easily, shifting

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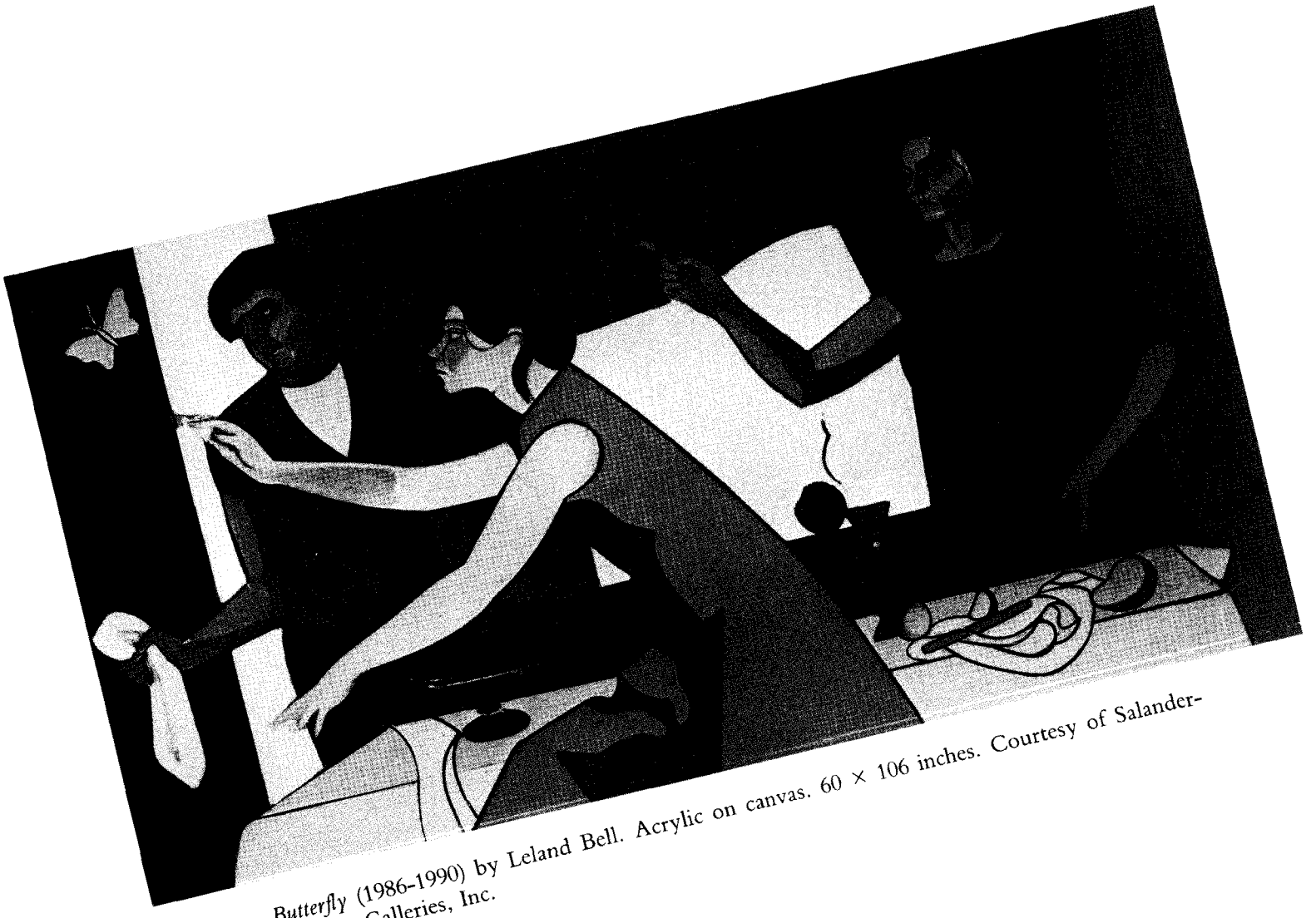

Butterfly (1986-1990) by Leland Bell. Acrylic on canvas. 60 × 106 inches. Courtesy of Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, Inc.

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scale to establish rhythmic two-dimensional patterns. Lawrence has devoted a great deal of time to mural compositions lately, which may account for his emphasis on dynamic all-overness. It's most evident in one of the best of the new works, *Builders in the City,* a 1993 gouache, where agile, curvilinear workmen, suggested with a variety of paint applications, from opaque to brushy, are interwoven with an exploding "grid" of ladders, beams and walls. At seventy-six, Lawrence shows no signs of slackening the inventiveness or the intensity of his work, but let's hope that we don't have to wait as long as we did this time to see his next New York exhibition.

And then there has been the Miró retrospective, at MoMA from mid-October through early January, a wonderful show that both confirmed what we already knew about the Catalan master and enlarged our understanding of his development. In a sense, there were no major surprises. The stripped-down paintings of the 1920s, with their infinite expanses of chalky color and tensely spaced, exquisitely drawn "personnages" were as magical and potent as ever, the dark, sour pictures of the 1930s as uncomfortable, and the late works as problematic. The show was generally very well chosen; no easy task with an artist like Miró, who investigated many ways of working, with wide swings in the quality of the results. The curator and author of the lucid, informative catalogue, Carolyn Lanchner, provided enough of the ceramics, the sculptures, the constructions, and the like for viewers to be able to draw their own conclusions, but she concentrated, wisely, on Miró's strengths. There were too many, too closely related paintings of the 1930s for my taste, but I was grateful for the general economy and rigor of the selection.

Among the pleasures of the show (besides the comprehensive assembly of works from the 1920s): early pictures that made clear the bewildering range of possibilities tested by the young painter before he found his distinctive voice; unfamiliar notebook drawings that revealed both Miró's sources and his processes of transformation; and perhaps most impressive, the entire *Constellation* series of 1941, reassembled at last. The *Constellations* constitute some of the rare works in which the artist came close to the level he set for himself in the 1920s, but in the end, it's the 1920s pictures that stay with you: the brushy, washy grounds that suggest infinite space and the act of painting all at once, the extraordinary drawing, the incredibly delicate hand gestures, the suggestive, "encoded" biomorphic forms. It's not just that these paintings, out of all of Miró's work, had the most influence on New York abstraction, complicated and absorbing as the relationship between the Catalan surrealist and the New York School may be; the 1920s paintings clearly stand out in absolute

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Lawyers and Clients (1993) by Jacob Lawrence. Gouache on paper. 29 and 3/4 × 22 inches. Photography by Ellen Page Wilson. Courtesy of Midtown Payson Galleries.

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terms, for their glorious touch, their subtle color, their ravishing refinement of drawing, and their compelling images.

An ambitious survey of Miró as a graphic artist was installed in MoMA's print galleries, but a more intimate, personal supplement to the retrospective was to be found at Galeria Joan Prats, in its new SoHo location. "Joan Prats," contrary to local legend, is not the charming Englishwoman who runs the New York branch of this long-established Barcelona gallery, but rather a lifelong friend and patron of his compatriot, Joan Miró. Prats, the heir to a thriving hat-manufacturing business (commemorated in a delightful found-object collage of 1934, in the MoMA retrospective), hoped to become an artist, but believed so strongly in Miró's remarkable (and superior) gifts that he became a supporter instead, working with his friend on a long series of print and publishing projects, among other things, and exhibiting the results. The show at Prats included letters, photographs and other memorabilia of this important friendship, all of which helped to illuminate a marvelous selection of drawings, prints, paintings, books, and studies for projects, many rarely or never before exhibited. The sheer quality of individual works was justification enough for the show, but the cumulative effect was to enhance our perception of Miró and broaden our sense of his activity and his reach.

In addition to these "old master" exhibitions, we had the now-usual assortment of efforts in alternative or quasi-alternative spaces that allow younger (and sometimes not so much younger) artists to have their work seen at a time when many dealers are reluctant to show anything without a guaranteed audience. You never know where the next good show will turn up. This summer, for example, three young artists, Sholto Ainslie, Randy Bloom, and Jon Isherwood (two painters and a sculptor, respectively), installed recent work at 101 Wooster Street, an elegant gallery space run not by a dealer but by an art-loving law firm. Ainslie's robust paintings, with their dense, articulated surfaces and saturated color, were his best yet. Their slightly battered quality, as though cobbled together from unnameable found elements, subverts the lushness of his paint-handling and his color and gives the pictures a welcome toughness and edginess. Bloom's cool, restrained canvases were accomplished, their pale hues and economical compositions refined and handsome, but I've seen recent work in her studio that impressed me more. The studio pictures are more aggressive, depending as they do on deliberately assonant color and erratic placement, but their rowdy energy is enormously appealing and their large-scale, idiosyncratic drawing suggestive and exciting. I've been a fan of Isherwood's concrete and steel sculptures for some time, so I was doubly happy to see them not only at 101 Wooster but in a subsequent show at David Beitzel Gallery. Isherwood has been flirting with architectural references in a subtle way, making vertical sculptures, both

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The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers (1941) by Joan Miró. Gouache and oil wash on paper. 18 × 15 inches. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.

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free-standing and table-mounted, that suggest walls, columns, secret chambers. When he succeeds best, you mentally enter the space defined or implied by planes of concrete and steel, but the pieces declare themselves as single, volumetric objects, the way traditional figure sculptures do. I'm less convinced by Isherwood's "baroque" pieces, where concrete ripples over steel structure, masking geometry with "soft" forms, but I'm willing to go along with it, to see where it takes him. Isherwood is one of the most thoughtful sculptors of his generation, and like Ainslie and Bloom a young artist to watch with interest and anticipation.

What else did I recommend to my visitors? Louise Fishman's paintings at Robert Miller Gallery in September and October, de Kooning drawings at Barbara Mathes in November and December, and the little Gorky exhibition at the Whitney from October to January. Fishman's show of her brooding, layered canvases was, to my eye, her best to date. The strongest pictures were somber and a little fierce, so much so that it was tempting to read their grid structure as a metaphor for suppressed or disciplined force. Fishman showed two types of pictures: grids and loose, more gestural paintings, apparently the products of explosive gestures, which reminded me, not to their benefit, of Gerhardt Richter's pompous abstractions down the street at Marian Goodman. I much preferred the grids, with their ambiguous swipes of dull, reverberant, almost metallic color. You weren't quite sure at first what was on top of what; were the floating rectangles created by intersecting passes or imposed on a layered surface? Exposed fragments of color between the rectangles offered clues, but nothing definitive. The most successful of the grid paintings seemed as much about their own history as about ideas of confrontation or the division of an expanse, so that they seemed to keep evolving as you watched, their forthright geometry as much a result of shifting density as of shifting color. I was sorry to learn that the big black-and-white "sweep" pictures (the Richter-ish ones) were more recent than the grids, but Fishman is probably a good enough painter to work through whatever interests her in the series and get back to the high level of the grids; at least I hope so.

The miniature retrospective of de Kooning drawings at Barbara Mathes Gallery was a gem. Not that it shouldn't have been, given de Kooning's well-known prowess as a draughtsman. (The quality and impact of the drawings so outstripped the paintings in his Whitney retrospective some years ago that wits called de Kooning the first artist in history to have upstaged himself.) The Mathes show gave us the full spectrum of de Kooning's achievement through an excellent selection of first-rate works, some with impressive provenances, from early portraits as meticulous and sensitive as anything by Ingres to late light-filled "landscapes." So many weak, hesitant late paintings have been shown

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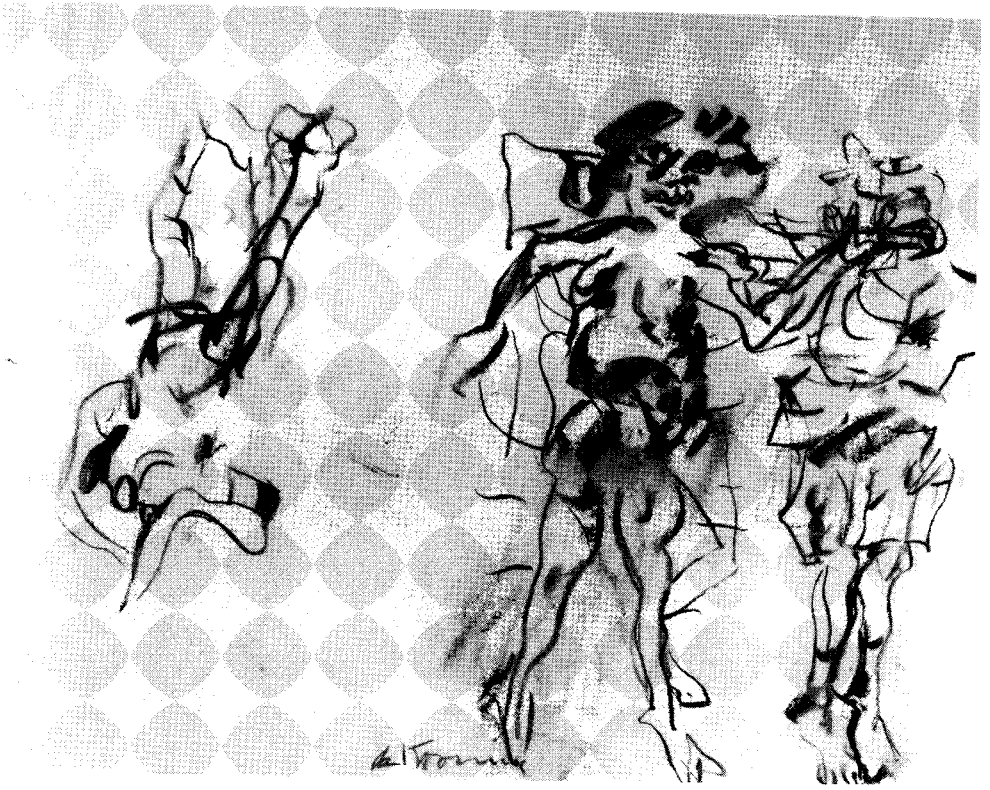

Untitled (1967) by Willem de Kooning. Charcoal on paper. 19 and 5/8 × 23 and 3/4 inches. Courtesy of Barbara Mathes Gallery.

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recently that it is especially good to be reminded of just what de Kooning was capable of at his best.

More surprising, given the Whitney's depressing track record, is "Collection in Context," a new series of small shows devoted to aspects of the museum's holdings. This fall's offering focused on the Whitney's superb Arshile Gorky, *The Betrothal II,* reuniting it with the other two versions of the picture now in the Yale University Art Gallery and the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, and many of the extant drawings related to the three paintings. The various *Betrothals,* painted in 1947, a year before Gorky's suicide, are paradigms of his mature art, so it was fascinating to have the insight into their evolution that comparison afforded, to note what was altered and what retained. Proportions change slightly, densities vary, the palette ranges from the cool daylight yellows of the Whitney picture to the silvery twilight grays of the Yale canvas. Despite wide variations in touch and resolution, however, Gorky's imagery remains virtually identical, yet always elusive; repetition does not make things clearer.

Seeing the Gorky show at more or less the same time as the Miró retrospective made Gorky's debt to Miró clear, but it also defined his independence from his Catalan colleague. Looking closely at a lot of Mirós almost automatically permits you to crack his private visual code, so those widely spread, spiky little forms become signs for body parts, animals, birds, weapons and more. Once you've learned Miró's "sign language," his narratives are quite legible, albeit unpredictable. Gorky's imagery, on the contrary, remains illegible, unyielding. Forms dissolve into passages of paint, lines unravel and wander off on their own. Everything seems only half-glimpsed, like barely remembered dream images or the unstable succubi of delirium.

The Whitney show's wealth of preparatory drawings, including one squared-up for transfer, bore eloquent witness to Gorky's careful development of *The Betrothals'* disturbing images. It was obvious that far from being spontaneous translations of personal demons into paint, as some 1950s critics insisted, Gorky's private rituals were enacted on canvas only after a long, deliberate and essentially traditional process. In the pamphlet that accompanied the show, LA MOCA's chief curator, Paul Schimmel, discusses this aspect of the artist's enterprise. His colleague, Klaus Kertess, the Whitney's adjunct curator of drawings, in his contribution to the pamphlet, concentrates on possible meanings while scrupulously respecting Gorky's obvious wish to disguise and conceal the specific sources of his eerie, ravishing inventions.

Schimmel's article is straightforward and informative, while Kertess's

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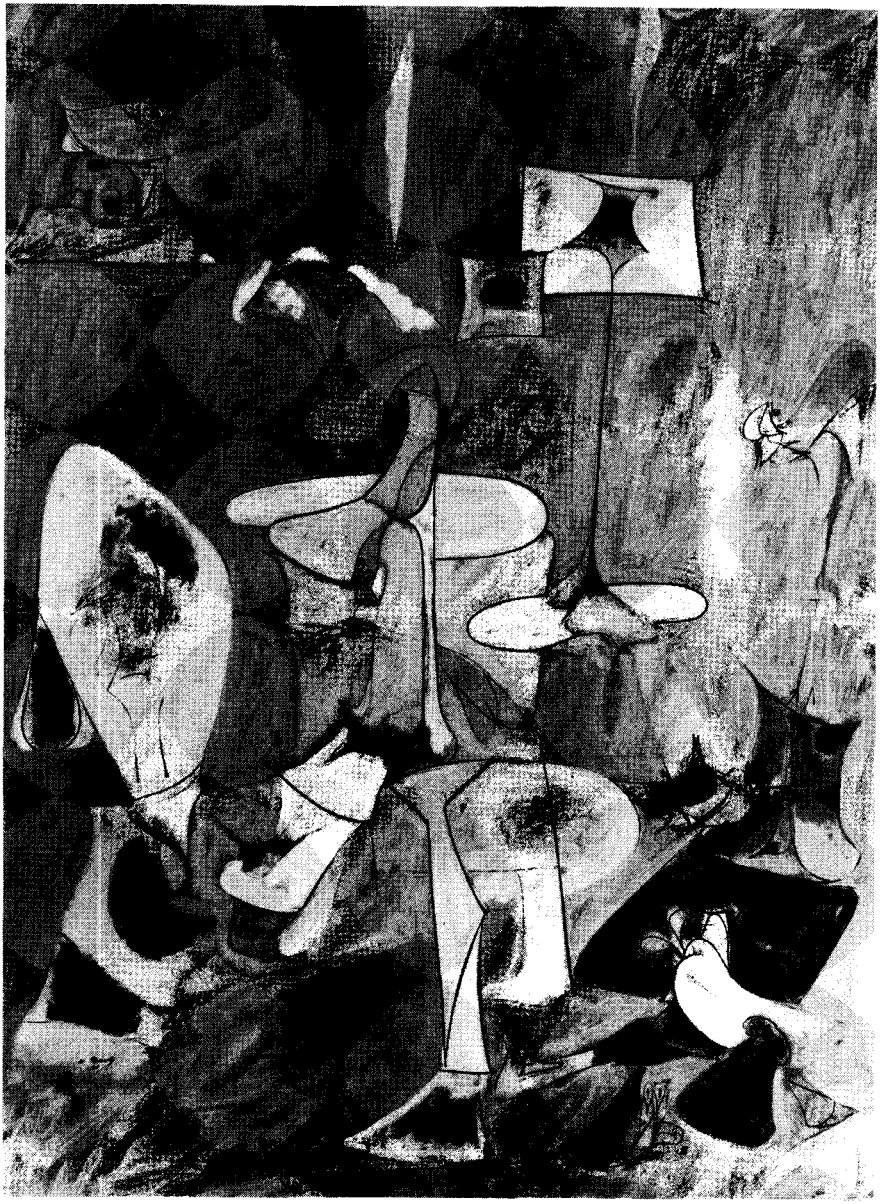

The Betrothal II (1947) by Arshile Gorky. Oil on canvas. 50 and 3/4 × 38 inches. Courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

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is imaginative and provocative. It places a fair amount of importance on Gorky's position as an immigrant, an outsider – Kertess quotes him as saying "I respond to modern life as an Armenian from Van" – and notes, in passing, the "major role" played by immigrants "in the formation of America's vanguard art in the 1940s." Perfectly true, of course, but Kertess lists as examples "immigrants such as Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, Philip Guston, and Adolph Gottlieb." I'll grant you de Kooning and even Guston, although I'm not sure that being brought from Montreal to California by your parents at the age of six is immigrant experience of the same order; but this listing certainly would have surprised Reinhardt and Gottlieb, who were among the few native New Yorkers among the Abstract Expressionists. Kertess is the Whitney's ranking staff intellectual at the moment. Is it too much to expect a curator at a leading museum of American art to know something about American artists? (Come to think of it, doesn't the Whitney have fact checkers?)

I didn't recommend the Guggenheim's much-touted Roy Lichtenstein retrospective to my visitors, although I probably should have for two reasons. First, the Guggenheim looks great with Lichtensteins in it. Those entirely graphic, overscaled pictures read wonderfully across the space, and it doesn't seem to hurt them at all to be seen at an angle or cropped by the edge of a ramp. Nor does it seem to matter whether you ever see them from a closer vantage point. People really seem to enjoy the exhibition. They stroll up and down the ramp, chatting, occasionally looking at a picture as they go by, rarely stopping for a closer look. You don't really have to stop. You can get it all at a glance.

The second reason is what some of my colleagues would call "phenomenological." The Lichtenstein retrospective is a simulacrum, a facsimile of an art exhibition. The early comic-book paintings look pretty much like "real" paintings if you don't look too closely, while the later works based on actual "high art" models are, for the most part, like translations of "real" paintings into mechanically produced decorative objects. I kept thinking of that plastic food used to advertise Japanese restaurants. It looks momentarily convincing, then fake, but appetizing; only the noodles "dangling" from floating chopsticks are wholly implausible. It's a simulacrum of dinner. Spend some time with these clever imitations and you're entertained, but no less hungry.

A show I wish I could have sent everyone to was *Kenneth Noland: The Circle Paintings, 1956-63,* organized by William C. Agee for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, where it was seen from mid-November to January. (In April and May it will be at the Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale.) It's a spectacular, frankly beautiful, and thought-provoking exhibition. The *Circles,* which established Noland's reputation in the

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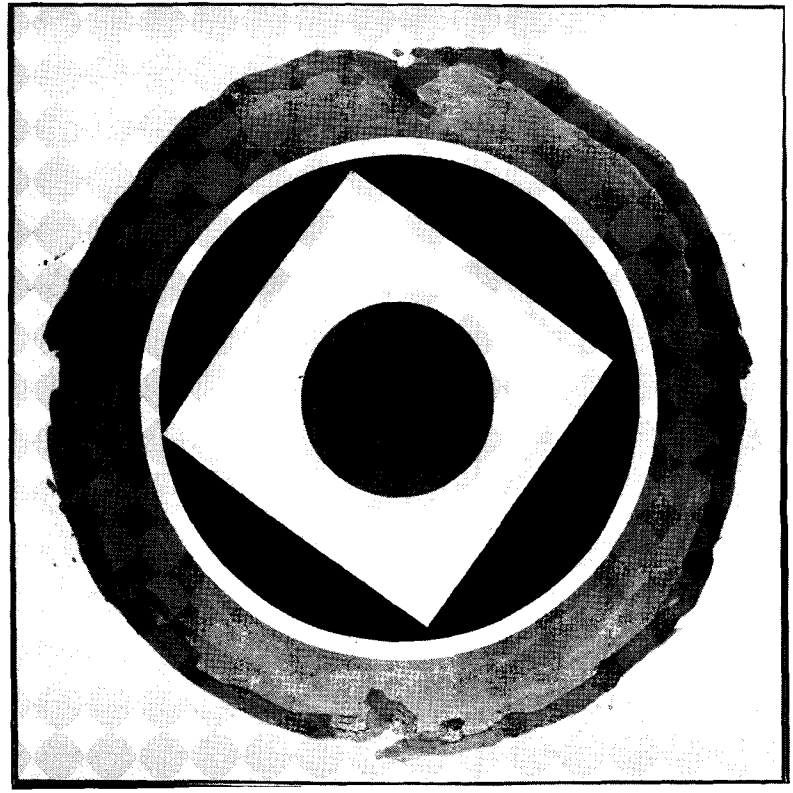

Split (1959) by Kenneth Noland. Acrylic on canvas. 94 × 94 and 1/4 inches. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

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1960s, remain some of the freshest, most radiant pictures ever painted in the United States. That was apparent from the first, but the wonderfully selected, impeccably installed exhibition makes clear that they are also some of the most intelligent (and intuitive) paintings made anywhere. Seeing the evolution of the motif, from the first loose, rather dense pictures of the series to the pristine, clean-edged, spare pictures of the 1960s, is like seeing a metaphor for the creation of order out of chaos. Noland turns the inchoate stuff of painting into inevitable-seeming, rational, symmetrical wholes. What's surprising is how painterly the *Circles* seem, these days, how much about the hand as well as the eye. The show emphasizes the range of Noland's invention, the significance he is able to extract from changes in interval, spacing, edge, density and more. But the most overwhelming aspect of these paintings is, of course, their extraordinary singing color, their unexpected harmonies of hues we are sure we have never seen before that at the same time remind us of all kinds of precedents in art and nature without literally recapitulating or describing any of them. The show is accompanied by a handsome catalogue with an excellent essay by Agee. The color reproductions don't come up to the real thing, but then, what could?

Coming in

Partisan Review

- An Interview with Helen Frankenthaler
- Jacob Weisberg on Holocaust Studies
- Irving Louis Horowitz on Contemporary Sociology
- *After the Polish Elections* by Aleksander Smolar
- Modern Document: Thomas Mann
- *Thomas Bernhard's Austria* by Steve Dowden
- Eugene Goodheart on Postmodernism
- James Olney on Richard Wright

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POEMS

JOHN ASHBERY

Bromeliads

In my original philosophy for the age of gink
it felt like a harp was being plucked.
How not to respond to those suggestions, if that's what they are,
like little breezes lifting grass and leaves,
as a delta of mattering fans out from
a point like a minimal encounter.

That's how I faced up and got far away
from the lucky island and arrived at this place of crossings
where no two things occupy the same outline
in both space and time. It's as if the people
who brought you up were to abandon you in your best interests
so as to bring on a crisis of enlightenment –
and then jump up from behind furniture and out of closets
screaming, "Surprise! Surprise!" But it's not clear
just who ages in the process. I look ever closer
into the mirror, into the poured grain of its surface, until another I
seems to have turned brusquely to face me, ready
to reply at last to those questions put long ago . . .

Will we achieve anything? Not likely.
But as starlings appear in patterns and in pairs, it
seems that *does* mean something and you shouldn't stay
in your cave until this century is forgotten.
Who'd pay the photographer then?
Did I tell you your prints are ready,
that you look as reckless as an enchanter emeritus
and weary as the first gables of spring?

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Spring Cries

Our worst fears are realized.
Then a string of successes, or failures, follows.
She pleads with us to stay: "Stay,
just for a minute, can't you?"

We are expelled into the dust of our decisions.
Knowing it would be this way hasn't
made any of it easier to understand, or bear.
May is raving. Its recapitulations

exhaust the soil. Across the marsh
some bird misses its mark, walks back, sheepish, cheeping.
The isthmus is gilded white. People are returning
to the bight: adult swimmers, all of them.

CHARLES TOMLINSON

Varenna

Waiting for the ferry
we watch the late sun
gilding inordinately
the lakeside town

and the lake itself,
as if to insist that we
need look no further:
immanence is mystery

where the column of sundown
reflects in a vertical
tall encroachment
like flickering oil,

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shoots into the harbour
flames that wrestle and dance
through each undulation
of the travelling substance,

till a peak comes between
and the fire-threads fray
and the darkening water
ferries night through the bay.

Roman Fugue

Beyond the window
from their rooftop terrace
the backs of three
statuary busts
gazing apparently
toward a striped awning
builders have draped
before their operation
on a pilastered
and arched façade: half
a builder – cut in two
by that sheet or screen –
walks an unseen plank
intently searching
for something just out of view
ignored by the procession
above his head
of small clouds crossing the Roman blue
in contrary motion.

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JANE KENYON

Sleepers in Jaipur

A mango moon climbs the dark
blue sky. In the gutters of a market
a white, untethered cow browses
the day's leavings – wilted greens,
banana peels, spilt rice,
a broken basket.

The sleepers, oh, so many sleepers . . .
They lie on rush mats in their hot
stick hut. The man and woman
want to love wildly, noisily.
Instead, they are quiet and efficient
in the dark. Bangles ring
as his mother stirs in her sleep.

Who can say what will come of
the quickening and slowing
of their breaths on each others'
necks, of their deep shudders?
Another sleeper, a gift of God,
ribs and shoulders to be clothed
in flesh . . .

In the dusty garden the water
she carried from the well in a jug
balanced on her black hair
stares back at the moon
from its cool terra-cotta urn.

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EAVAN BOLAND

In a Bad Light

This is St. Louis. Where the rivers meet. The Illinois. The Mississippi.
The Missouri.
The light is in its element of Autumn. Clear. With yellow Ginko leaves
falling.
There is always a nightmare. Even in such light.

The weather must be cold now in Dublin. And when skies are clear frosts
come
down on the mountains and the first inklings of winter will be underfoot
in
the crisp iron of a fern at dawn.

I stand in a room in the Museum. In one glass case a plastic figure
represents a woman in a dress with crepe sleeves and a satin apron.
And feet laced neatly into suede.

She stands in a replica of a cabin on a steamboat bound for New Orleans.
The year is 1860. Nearly war. A notice says no comforts were spared.
The silk is French. The seamstresses are Irish.

I see them in the oil-lit parlours. I am in the gas-lit backrooms. We make
in the apron front and from the papery appearance and crushable look
of crepe a sign. We are bent over

in a bad light. We are sewing a last sight of shore. We are sewing coffin
ships
and the salt of exile. And our own death in it. For history's abandonment
we are doing this. And this. And

this is a buttonhole. This is a stitch. Fury enters them as frost follows
every
arabesque and curl of a fern. This is the nightmare. See how you perceive
it:
We sleep the sleep of exhaustion.

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We dream a woman on a steamboat parading in sunshine in a dress we
know
we made. She laughs off rumours of war. She turns and traps light on the
skirt.
It is, for that moment, beautiful.

ANURADHA MAHAPATRA

Crow

"There is no death in this promise" –
strangled in water hyacinth and moss.
Saying this today, desiring its own eye,
such water drifts far away. Some crazy bird knows
that even today, the blue of that monsoon month
and the ferryman's folksongs are linked
in their own hollows.
The moss doesn't wear off from
the body, even on the immersion day.
An unknown breathless patience floats
towards the north,
devours itself alive.
The foot of this tree silently agrees,
the crazy bird's wings
cast their shadows in the river.

Translated from the Bengali by Paramita Banerjee and Carolyne Wright

DAVID BARBER

The Spirit Level

You kept your tools sequestered,
out of sight. And to this day, the logic
of the ratchet and the crescent wrench
evades me, I'm unable to brandish a saw

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or drive a batch of penny nails
without a twinge of sheepishness.
But the spirit level
is another story: so ingenious
in the essence of its utility
that it's practically child's play.
Yours was as long as your arm:
a perfect ersatz shotgun for a boy
like me. But stealing downstairs
first thing Sunday mornings, bent on infiltrating
your cluttered basement sanctum,
I found it more ingratiating
for what it was, for how it wedded
simple premise and ample mystery.
Winking in their tubes
of tinted glass, those emerald bubbles
never burst or vanished,
no matter how furiously I shook them up
or how cagily I aimed
to tilt and drown them. It seemed to me
there had to be some clever dodge
concealed in its sundry uses, like umbrellas
that sheath a hidden sword
or the dining table's folded wings.
Still, what artfulness I grasped
held all the thrill of minor sorcery:
the fingernail flecks of nervous air
that performed my bidding faithfully,
the flickering means to divine
absolute vertical, true horizontal, the rightful
cut of angles. Did I ever tell you
the basement floor sloped faintly, here
and there, the windowsills betrayed
a slant? Did I tell you how the doorframes
would make the bubble tremble,
as if the house were slowly beginning
to sink down on one knee?

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TODD BOLI

The March of Extinctions

Countless dead stars whose light is still arriving,
the lakes of Mars, volcanoes on the moon,
the stubborn trilobites, good at surviving,
brief birds appearing late, departing soon;

the temple cult, the *pax* of Caesar's Rome,
the recipe for Stradivari's glue,
the wilderness where strangers were at home,
the liberty that freed us from the few;

clean snow in winter, leaders undisgraced,
hope for attainment in a real career,
work, love, or friendship unconstrained by haste,
old Lowell hymning Agassiz so dear;

my sister's voice, the thought of my first wife,
and by now maybe two-thirds of my life.

The Veneration of Relics

The snake of brass, the ark of shittim wood,
the lance, the cross, the veil, St. Andrew's head,
the shroud adored as though its claim were good,
remains that rouse affection for the dead;

the thousand beds where Washington once slept,
the page whose signers pledged they'd hang together,
spent musket balls our great-grandparents kept
to tie their times to ours with sacred tether;

not vague, equivocating signs but *things*
that tell the truth their keepers knew they meant,
each one a testimony that still brings
the past to life and goes where it once went –

not those old letters that I threw away,
that never said what I'd have had them say.

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BORIS CHRISTOV

Spirit

Tired of watching my body stuff itself
Hunched over its dish of stewmeat and its glass,
My spirit flew away like a celestial wolf
Trotting the heavens on its invisible paws.

Where are you headed for through infinite space,
Proud flier, howling at the dark around you?
In the boundless universe, could there be any place
Still undiscovered, beyond these that surround you?

But from the moment that the spirit-wolf trod
Among the stars he was coursing toward the purlieus
Of the hidden sheepfold where the lambs of God
Graze the deep grasses of Paradise's meadows.

The gates, in ruin for many a millenium,
Lay in a heap close by a cherry tree.
With a predator's watchful air about him,
My spirit wriggled under the fence stealthily.

"Wait a minute, you winged wolf, before you dare
Sneak into that trap of knowledge. It will snap once,
Then nothing will be left of you in there.
You'll eat at yourself till nothing's left but bones."

But how can anything cross the mighty gulf
Of deafness that yawns between the lips and the ears?
Having strangled the Lamb of God, the wolf
Of my spirit padded the moon-path among the stars.

The ram who saw him in the dark began to weep.
The plaintive bleating of the whole flock joined his cry.
The cosmos itself burst into tears with the sheep,
And blood-stained stars fell from the grieving sky.

Meanwhile, on earth, my body was wiping the grease
From its muzzle. Drinking and eating too much made it heavy.
On the table before it, instead of the Golden Fleece,
Lay only a mess of bones in a puddle of gravy.

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Body

The spirit is in bed, it has been sleeping away
For hours now, but my body is awake and prowling
The dark streets like an owl intent on its prey,
Heedless of the roosters in the hills, already calling.

It stalks on into the dawn, peers into a drain
Or a murky ditch, trips over a shadow in its way,
Scrapes itself on a stone facade. Rivers of rain
Drum on my head, but can't wash the mud away.

My mouth, which has been silent such a long time
Holding its teeth clenched tight, now opens wide
And I imagine I hear the ocean of wine
That it has swallowed, sloshing around inside.

The blood pumps into the very nails of my toes,
It hits the heels and like an ape leaps up again.
A little ulcer flares like a torch that throws
Red light on an invisible jungle within.

The legs get back into action, the stiff joints crank
Gunpowder into their muscles to move them, the twist
Of the left knee pulling westward, the other shank
Dragging its faithful shoe towards the east.

The body quivers, it has decided to fly
Above the earth to the yellow throne of dawn . . .
But it can't take off with the violations that weigh
Heavily on its mudstained wings, holding them down.

Malicious with impotence – blind mouse forced to suck
At the stony tit of a nut – it has to slog
Heavily on through the rain. It writes on the sidewalk
The words *Live like a bird – die like a dog*.

Translated from the Bulgarian by Robert Pinsky

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BOOKS

The Trillings

THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY: THE MARRIAGE OF DIANA AND LIONEL TRILLING. By Diana Trilling. Harcourt Brace & Co. $24.95.

This double-biography was produced under severe physical constraints; as Mrs. Trilling explains in her preface, her sight is now so bad that she had to dictate rather than write it. It could have been achieved only by an author of commanding memory and intelligence, and it is the more remarkable in that its prose is so strong and of such tonal variety. Even if it were less strikingly good considered simply as a piece of writing, it would have unignorable claims on the attention of all who take an interest in the intellectual history of twentieth-century New York, which of course includes, as she doesn't fail to point out, the history of *Partisan Review*.

A great many of those who made that history are now dead, and the book ends with a melancholy list, as if for inscription on a memorial monument, of those "strange difficult ungenerous unreliable unkind and not altogether honest people who created the world in which Lionel and I shared": Elliot Cohen, Herbert Solow, Henry Rosenthal, Philip Rahv, Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, Hannah Arendt, Sidney Hook, Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, Fred Dupee, Margaret Marshall, Delmore Schwartz, William Barrett, James Agee, Bernard Haggin, Irving Howe. This list, we are told, could be much longer. "Not easy companions," as she moderately remarks of some of them, but they are discussed with much the same sympathetic candor as the author accords herself and her husband. All were and are extremely valuable, indeed they have never been replaced; but none who deserved it escapes censure.

No one who knows Diana Trilling will be surprised at this understanding forthrightness; what may surprise some is that this book has a quality above and beyond that of being authoritative history. Of all the autobiographies I know, it is the one that can accurately be described as comic, in the sense that without avoiding the dark passages, the melancholy, the betrayals, it is aware of their shading over into folly and absurdity, aware of their place in the larger context of the human comedy.

I ought to say that I write as one who regards Diana Trilling as a highly esteemed friend. Although I see her only on infrequent visits to New York and cannot be as close as many New Yorkers are, I know her

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at least well enough not to suppress my true opinion of her work; she would scorn prevarication. I mean to be taken seriously when I say that this is a quite exceptional book.

I have no firsthand knowledge of the years in which she became an influential figure in the intellectual life of the city nor of the intense political arguments of the thirties which were, so to speak, her graduate education. But one thing seems certain: in some though of course not in all ways, those years were fun, and she must have contributed largely to the entertainment. I have heard enough of her talk to understand that she is by nature, and among many other things, a comedian. I also know that even in her own city and among her more casual acquaintances this characterization might be greeted with some astonishment. There exist certain hilarious anecdotes that could find no place in this book, which nevertheless contains much hilarity – the account of the Trillings' wedding, for example, is a masterpiece of comic detail. Weddings have their importance; these occasions of mirth are never trivial and can indeed, very properly, be matters of life and death. Mrs. Trilling's kind of humor could not be more remote from mere flippancy.

The stories of the separate childhoods of the pair are told in this serio-comic spirit, forming a kind of diptych. Diana's was an "anxious world," and the anxieties are chronicled in a splendid epic catalogue: "Here are some of the things of which I and the grown-ups around me were afraid," she says, and there follows a list of a hundred or so terrors, from horses, snakes, and worms, to cemeteries, syphilis, gypsies and, especially, burglars. Yet from all these childhood terrors she claims to have entered adolescence "unscarred," partly by reason of the self-confidence inspired by her heroic forename. Lionel, on the other hand, deplored his equally heroic but odd and alien label, envying other boys more conventionally and more toughly equipped, though he did have as his middle name "Mordecai," another heroic appellation, remembered for a while but later dropped.

There is a neat parallelism between these childhoods. Both of the children were pretty well-to-do, and in various ways both were coddled. We read of Diana going to school in her father's chauffeur-driven limousine. Lionel, setting out to play with other boys who had more usual names and had brought sandwiches, would be followed by a servant carrying a lamb chop on a salver. There was a lot of food, here remembered in affectionate detail. At Radcliffe, Diana and the other girls were heavily into it, and therefore heavy. "The pathologies of anorexia and bulimia were not yet known," she reminds us.

This comfortable juvenile plenty was not good preparation for the relative poverty that struck them as a young married couple in their twenties. Both their families were wiped out by the crash of 1929, and for

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years Lionel, despite his meager earnings, supported his relations. But in any case Mrs. Trilling never regards childhood as a sound preparation for subsequent life. She spent many years with psychiatrists, striving to remedy her disastrous infantile inheritance. Terrors apart, she recalls mostly the sadnesses of the early years. Of her mother's native language, Polish, she remembers nothing that isn't alarming; as to her father, one keen memory is of his way of inhibiting her childish desire for self-display – a prohibition which, she claims, has had a very restrictive influence on her later life. Lionel was in his own way almost equally inhibited; yet their childhoods might presumably have been credited with providing some of the positive qualities which made them both good and successful people, were it not for the strong sense that given more favorable early environments they might have been even more so.

Despite the prevailing impression that they were passed in an atmosphere of solemn and combative intellectuality, there is a surprising wildness about the lives of the youthful pair. "Until Lionel and I decided to marry, we were never sober in each other's company. . . ." Illness put a stop to Diana's drinking, but not Lionel's, even though he was aware that a single cocktail induced in him an unpleasant character change. Especially though of course not only under Prohibition, drinking was the "ruling pathology among writers," and we read with some astonishment that the Trillings favored a drink called the Bullfrog, "made of gin, apricot brandy, and grenadine," with Brandy Alexanders in between Bullfrogs. "On Bullfrogs and Alexanders," we are told, "Lionel and I got to know each other well enough to decide to marry." At this point I recalled an experience of my own, on V-J Day, which I spent at an American mess in the Manus Islands, drinking Howitzers, mad concoctions on which no decisions of any kind, least of all to marry, could have been made without disaster. The image of the Trillings as topers, fit to remind me of that escapade, is a violation of the whole public image of the pair. Of course it is part of the purpose of this book to change that image.

The illness which ended Diana's addiction to Bullfrogs was the first of many, some very serious; the most persistent seem to have been psychic in character. Hence the psychoanalysis, which she describes at some length, never without respect for the real thing but with a good deal of disgust at what she mostly got from the practitioners of the day. Some were simply ignorant or incompetent. Some died, with all the painful inconvenience such defections inflict on analysands. Ruth Brunswick, though distinguished, was a cocaine addict and unreliable. Lionel's analytic experiences were not much more fortunate.

Why did they persist in such expensive and ineffective cures? Beliefs in Freud and Marx were more or less obligatory in the intellectual circles of the thirties, and the faith was sometimes promulgated with an almost

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theological rigor. As for the fanaticism of the card-carrying Communists, we read of one friend of the Trillings who had made a hit list of political opponents to be purged after the Revolution. The story of Whittaker Chambers, so curiously involved with Lionel Trilling, resembles one of those Victorian novels about faith and its loss.

With more moderation but still plenty of political animus, *Partisan Review,* taken over in 1937 by William Phillips and Philip Rahv, had a Marxist but anti-Stalinist program, no proposals for purges but no truck with imperialism. It followed that it must oppose American participation in the war that was obviously on the way, for any major war must inevitably be an imperialist war. This view, strongly defended by Dwight Macdonald, held sway until after Pearl Harbor.

The Trillings did not share it. They had been converted to Communism at Yaddo, by Sidney Hook, although Diana, never one for blind obedience, rebelled against some of the rules of the community, and was temporarily expelled from it by the famous Mrs. Ames – not a good omen for a neophyte Communist. Hook himself, of course, was later to become a scourge of the left; and the Trillings also turned anti-Communist but stayed liberal, in the middle, where they belonged. Lionel, in the introduction to the reissued edition of his novel *The Middle of the Journey* (1975), reflected that "the relation of the class of bourgeois intellectuals to the Communist movement will, I am certain, increasingly engage the attention of social and cultural historians, who can scarcely fail to see it as one of the most curious and significant phenomena of our epoch." *The Beginning of the Journey* is a contribution to that proposed research. The Trillings, with their own brand of liberalism, were awkwardly placed with their crowd; for one thing, they were inescapably and unfashionably of "the hated middle class." They liked to do their serious thinking for themselves; admittedly, hindsight detects an element of irresponsible game-playing in these honorable lucubrations. "It seldom occurred to any of us that political action [much less, presumably, political argument] might have political consequence." It was only later that discarded Communist sympathies could be cited against one as permanently subversive.

It is hard to think of these habitually critical people toeing any political party line, observing any such discipline, for long. Working for the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, a Communist-front organization, gave them an insight into the operations of the Party which, together with the advent of Hitler, hastened their apostasy. The whole experience was important for Trilling's novel *The Middle of the Journey,* and for the volume of essays which did most to consolidate his reputation, *The Liberal Imagination.*

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"The need not to deviate from truth drags like an anchor on this book," says Mrs. Trilling, adding that this compulsion is what prevented her from writing fiction. She thinks her husband's fiction was a way to find "freedom from the stifling restraints of conscience," but he couldn't quite break out. He admired Hemingway, in her view extravagantly, and not least for his style of life, which lacked measure and prudence to a degree of which Trilling knew himself quite incapable. Mrs. Trilling tends to see the course of their joint lives, and possibly of all lives, as affected by a competition between desire and inhibition – even her obsession with the truth is seen as the result as well as a cause of unfortunate constraints. Lionel's success in the academy, as they both knew, was not what he really wanted; something – that mildness, those gentle manners, that famous equability (though it concealed a morose and sometimes angry temperament) – got in the way of his wish, which was to be a novelist and to live wildly. Only on rare occasions would he fire up, behave with apparently uncharacteristic firmness or fierceness, as when he fought successfully against his dismissal from Columbia. There was, under the surface, that force; and perhaps this temperamental duality was reflected in his prose style, so gravely alive, "firm and flexible" as Mrs. Trilling calls is, claiming – and we believe it – her share in its formation.

She praises and blames herself whenever praise and blame are due, and she does the same for her husband. We are told of "my personal contribution to my defeat," that lack of direction, whether as a student of art history or as a singer, which, she claims, had far more to do with her early lack of productivity than anti-Semitism. We learn of her panic attacks, her hyperthyroidism, her rampant superego, her acceptance of a dependent marital role; and we also learn of the strain these characteristics sometimes placed on her husband, who bore them well, but who is not therefore wholly exempt from criticism. There were times when she dreaded to be alone and he was required, at whatever inconvenience, to be near. When she began to emerge as her own woman, as a writer, she liked doing unsigned reviews but panicked when asked to do longer, signed ones; again she suffered from that parental ban on self-display, a shyness that, as she admits, was opposed by a quite violent desire to be the object of all eyes. Rationality, one of her stronger points, also had its hidden enemies. Her not realizing until the age of forty-two, and then in a random flash of inspiration, that it was then if ever time for her to have a child, is close to incredible, except that one believes everything this book says; acutely, she remarks that she had up to then been having panics instead of babies.

Meanwhile Lionel was not as dependent on her as she was on him. He could go on, though too slowly for his taste, with his own career, mostly patient, always under stress, financial and emotional, often de-

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pressed. "In the dark recesses of his heart where unhappiness was so often his companion, he was contemptuous of everything in his life which was dedicated to seriousness and responsibility." His wife here records his journal entry that "the continuing sense that wickedness – or is it my notion of courage – is essential for creation." Later he was dejected and even bitter at his publisher's failure to promote *The Middle of the Journey* seriously. He was surprised to find himself an eminent man of letters, for what he supposed were not the desirable reasons. It was not as a novelist that he was acclaimed, but as a critic, and as a teacher with an extraordinary array of students: Fritz Stern, John Hollander, Jason Epstein, Richard Howard, Steven Marcus, Norman Podhoretz, Louis Simpson . . . the list goes on, long enough to make almost any old professor feel he had led a valuable life. But it seems it was not what he wanted.

The theme of this double biography is that the double life it describes could have only that somewhat disappointed end. In one remarkable and comical aside, Mrs. Trilling wishes her husband could have contrived to be more wicked: "I could have wished him to have a thousand mistresses were this to have released him from the constraints upon him as a writer of fiction. I would willingly have been his female Leporello and sung his conquests." Certainly one of Mrs. Trilling's aspirations is fully realized: she has without question changed the way in which he will be thought of, even by people who knew him quite well, and she will have the satisfaction of knowing that respect for him will be increased, not diminished, by her revelations.

Held though they were in what Clifton Fadiman sadly called "the imprisonment of matrimony," the Trillings were far from reclusive. Those untrustworthy, argumentative, ill-mannered friends trekked in and out of their apartment. Mrs. Trilling has from childhood been a stickler for good manners, but she tolerated the exploitative Edward Dahlberg, the furtive Whittaker Chambers (she has news about that pumpkin), the depressed Herbert Solow, who would "move from one house to another, leaving his gift of gloom, like a cat depositing a half-eaten bird at the feet of his master." There are glimpses of other luminaries: Mary McCarthy, "fresh out of Vassar," who "went to bed with a different man each day, sometimes with more than one," and told them "that she began to worry that she might be promiscuous"; Catherine Bauer, a pupil of Lewis Mumford's, who blamed her failure to get on with a book about city planning on "the breakdown of capitalism." Then there was Sidney Hook in his later style, becoming, in Mrs. Trilling's view, not only dogmatic but boastful and careless of the truth, falsely claiming to have formulated the politics of *Partisan Review* and to have saved Trilling's job when Columbia put it in jeopardy in 1936. There was Lionel's boss at

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Columbia, Emery Neff, complacently anti-Semitic; and Elliot Cohen, a "genius of horrible intimacy," who published the early Lionel in *The Menorah Journal* and remained a difficult friend. There were others equally sinister, and yet others more benign: Jacques Barzun, Fred Dupee, Clifton Fadiman.

All, whether benign or malignant, played a part in these rich though constrained lives, and did nothing to impair their "lust for honesty." Mrs. Trilling several times laments the failure of succession: where are the comparable intellectuals now? Not among the neoconservatives, not among the politically correct, whom she regards as deviant descendants of the old "cultural Stalinism." Her old guard, for all its faults, "kept the general culture of the country in balance. It is no longer in balance." "Our best intelligences" have given up "the life of significant contention." But it is with the eye of the satirist that she sees in the lost culture she admires the occasional narrowness, the doctrinaire absurdity, that gave what now look like hopeless, naive revolutionary aspirations an air of intelligent liveliness. That eye is cast also upon her own behavior and on her marriage, always appallingly serious, at times appallingly funny.

A few things have gone wrong with the book. Some are trivial: it cannot plausibly be suggested that Christopher Isherwood was an unknown writer when Diana Trilling reviewed *Prater Violet* in 1945; he was already celebrated as a novelist and quite well known as a playwright. It is even less true that E. M. Forster was "scarcely known beyond a small literary coterie" in 1943, the date of Lionel Trilling's book about him: *A Passage to India* had been famous for twenty years, and Forster himself was quite probably the best-known living English novelist. Finally, J. R. Ackerley was never the editor of *The Listener,* only its literary editor.

More seriously, her amanuenses, doubtless devoted in some ways, have let Mrs. Trilling down in others. If only they had called in someone who knew what paragraphs are for! Here they ramble on for pages, with no break between distinct topics. For a while I tried, then gave up trying, to mend them. And finally there is too much repetition, perhaps unavoidable when a long text is dictated, but it should have been spotted and eliminated by a fully-sighted editor.

These are minor defects in a superlatively good book by a fully human woman. It is a tribute to the power and integrity with which she remade herself in middle life, and, triumphantly, in old age. "Difficult as it is," she remarks at one point, "to support old age with pride even when one has a loved companion, for a woman alone it is a fierce test of courage: only the luckiest of us have work with which to meet it. In work, especially work at which one has some measure of success, a woman can at least find a substitute for the sexual power which she must

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lose with the years." This is true, and is true even of men; but then this book is true. In older times, the times in which she formed herself, it might well have been described as "life-enhancing."

FRANK KERMODE

The Loathing of America

ANTI-AMERICANISM: CRITIQUES AT HOME AND ABROAD, 1965-1990. By Paul Hollander. Oxford University Press. $35.00.

Some people do not like the Japanese, others do not get along with the French, still others stay clear of children. These are simple antipathies of little consequence. But there are aversions that assume the form of phobias – fears and hostilities that come to dominate one's life because they seem to explain its misfortunes and frustrations. When such phobias strike large numbers the results are dangerous mass movements, ready-made material for demagogues. The most prevalent of these is anti-Semitism; skin color and class- and gender-based resentments also belong in this category. To Paul Hollander, a professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, belongs the honor of having discovered yet another public phobia, anti-Americanism. As he depicts it, it is a common disorder whose victims, however, are to be found almost exclusively among the educated and affluent.

Professor Hollander is a Hungarian who, having emigrated to the United States after 1956, became increasingly puzzled by the prevalence among Western intellectuals of admiration for despotic Communist Russia and antipathy for democratic America. On the former subject he wrote *Political Pilgrims,* published in 1981; the latter forms the subject of his new book. The two works complement each other and are a significant contribution to the understanding of the mentality of twentieth-century intelligentsia, a social group that, despite its immense influence on public opinion, has not been adequately studied.

Anti-Americanism is a long book, replete with examples of anti-American sentiment in the churches, at the universities, and in the mass media in the United States, Europe, Mexico, and Canada. It is not without flaws. Some of these have been pointed out by reviewers, even those

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sympathetic to the author's thesis. The organization bears all the earmarks of the "cut-and-paste" technique; the subject is pursued with a dogged determination that allows for no humorous relief; the analysis of the evidence could be deeper. All this is true. But in the author's defense two points require stress. To locate, read, copy and analyze the solemn anti-American nonsense that he has gathered is more conducive to arousing anger or perhaps pity than merriment. Secondly, anticipating an unfriendly reception, he thought it prudent to present evidence that, by its sheer volume, would prove impossible to deny.

In this reader's opinion he has succeeded in proving his case. He has demonstrated that a large body of the intelligentsia here and abroad despises America not so much for what it does as for what it is, and that in its obsessiveness and immunity to rational argument this loathing resembles Judeophobia. Much of the evidence he cites, chapter and verse, has a lunatic quality to it, even though its authors are often individuals of great distinction in their particular fields of endeavor. But then the same thing holds true of anti-Semitism, a fixation known not to spare even the greatest writers and artists.

In seeking an explanation for this curious phenomenon, Hollander is driven to the conclusion that the anti-Americanists identify America with "modernization"; and since modernization spells change, it causes "understandable apprehension and anguish among those who seek to preserve a more stable and traditional way of life." This explanation certainly holds true for mass movements which resist modernization (secularization), the outstanding example being Muslim fundamentalism.

Yet the explanation is far from exhaustive, because anti-Americanism is not a lower-class mass movement *par excellence*. The "masses" everywhere readily take to American culture because its value-free, hedonistic ethic has the effect of emancipating the individual from the confines of family and community as well as the constraints of religion. This is precisely the reason why the upper classes, along with the intellectuals who like to think of themselves as a spiritual aristocracy, despise it so much: for it subverts the masses by inculcating in them the vision of an economically and culturally egalitarian society.

It is unconvincing to argue that the intellectuals who fill the pages of this book with their inanities are inspired by the quest for "a more stable and traditional way of life." If this were the case, why would so many of them sympathize with revolutionary movements, including Castro's Cuba and Sandanista Nicaragua? I am not persuaded by Hollander's conclusion:

> . . . in the end one is compelled to return to the idea . . . that the restlessness of estranged intellectuals and the hostility of the adversary

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> culture are in all probability generalized responses to the discontents of life in a thoroughly modernized, wealthy, secular and individualistic society where making life meaningful requires great ongoing effort and remains a nagging problem – at any rate for those whose attention does not have to be riveted on the necessities of survival.

Surely, the problem facing contemporary intellectuals is not that they are trying to make life "meaningful" since, judging by the literature, literary criticism or philosophy they turn out, they are doing their best to rob it of meaning.

I believe Hollander takes too idealistic a view of his protagonists. They are, in fact, motivated not only by the difficulties of coping with modern life – when were intellectuals happy with the world in which they happened to live? – but also by frustrated ambition. The distinguishing quality of intellectuals at all times and everywhere has been the conviction that they know better and, hence, that they ought to lead the blind and ignorant masses. It is an ambition they rarely have the opportunity to realize: and when they do get the chance, as in Russia in February of 1917, they quickly prove themselves unworthy of it. But the lust for power never leaves, and neither do the pains of unfulfilled ambition.

Intellectuals have always played a minor role in the United States. America esteems not thinkers and dreamers but doers, and it treats culture not as the highest expression of the human spirit but as entertainment which allows escape from the harsh realities of life. Although relatively well off and influential in shaping public opinion, especially in political matters, American intellectuals have no access to the levers of power which are controlled by people whom they hold in contempt. Their social prestige is low. I vividly recall my shock when, having arrived from Poland in 1940 and fervently aspiring to become someday a university professor, I heard it said, "Them that can, do; them that can't, teach." I also learned soon after finishing graduate school to explain apologetically that I was not a "real" doctor, merely a Ph.D.

From all of this I deduce that the loathing of America – not just the country but the ideal which it embodies – is essentially an elitist sentiment widespread among intellectuals who detest the American lifestyle because it caters to the common man and his common, vulgar culture, reducing them to a powerless caste on the fringe of society. What could Graham Greene have had in mind when he said that if he had to choose between living in America or Soviet Russia he would "certainly" choose Soviet Russia (while, in fact, making his home in southern France)? I think he meant that under Communism writers were rewarded not only with huge

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honoraria but also with privileged status and respect, while the noxious manifestations of modern mass ("American") culture were driven underground. This theme runs through many of the examples Hollander cites: America is the enemy of high and noble visions whose guardians are intellectuals and which find ideal expression in socialism and Communism. And if these ideals cannot be attained, then traditional societies, with their stable classes, are preferable to the infernally upwardly-mobile society represented by "Amerika."

I cannot prove it, but I have the distinct impression that anti-Americanism is most prevalent among second-rate talents who require public approbation and honors to feel satisfaction in their work. Several years ago I listened to Joseph Brodsky being interviewed on the *MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour*. Robin MacNeil, bemused by his guest's eulogies of his adopted country, asked him what he found so attractive about America and Americans. "They leave me alone," Brodsky replied – which I think is all that a creative person can ask of society. This is not to condone the undeniable vulgarity of a great deal of modern American culture: its consumerism gone berserk; its monetary yardstick of literary or artistic achievement; the living obscenity that calls herself "Madonna"; Disneyland in the heart of France. But it is not the intellectual's task to impose his values on society: rather it is to create them and hope they find acceptance. This America makes possible as no society ever did, both by virtue of economic opportunities and virtually unrestrained freedom of speech.

The importance of Hollander's book lies not in an exhaustive analysis of the phenomenon of anti-Americanism but in establishing, in an irrefutable manner, its existence. It furthermore demonstrates that anti-Americanism is not mere "bias" but a chronic malaise of the intellectual class – the anti-Semitism of the mandarins.

RICHARD PIPES

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Apocalyptic Thought

PREPARING FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. By Paul Kennedy. Random House. $25.00.

THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THE END OF THE MODERN AGE. By John Lukacs. Ticknor and Fields. $21.95.

With the approach of the end of a century (and *a fortiori* a millennium), apocalyptic thought has been the historical fashion, manifesting itself in theology, philosophy, literature, and the arts. During the 1890s books that were (or could have been) entitled *The End of . . .* (or *The Decline of . . .*) were frequent. There may be no particular reason why these round figures have had such an effect. Perhaps it is the result of a too-literal interpretation of certain passages in the Book of Revelation. In all probability it has been quite accidental, but once a certain pattern has been established, it seems to perpetuate itself. The two books reviewed here are mild cases of this *fin de siècle* literature.

Before the publication of his book *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987), which became a best seller, Paul Kennedy was known in the historical profession mainly for his fine work on the period before World War I. Written in measured, moderate terms, *Rise and Fall* nevertheless generated a great deal of passion: The declinists embraced it with great enthusiasm as their most learned manifesto; the opposite camp produced a whole literature to refute Kennedy. That empires have risen and declined all throughout history can hardly be denied; if it were different, we would still live under the sway of the Mongols or Assyrians or all speak Portuguese or Dutch. ("Rome fell, Babylon fell, Scarsdale's turn will come.") It is a different question to what extent imperial overstretch had to do with excessive military spending, except perhaps in such cases as Napoleon and Hitler, but these were hardly classical empires. These issues should certainly be explored: If the United States had spent on military expenditures, for example, three percent of its GNP in the period after World War II instead of five to seven percent, would it be essentially better off today? I doubt it; even in the case of the Soviet Union (which spent four times or more on a per capita basis), it is far from certain that excessive military spending was the single most important factor for the disintegration of the empire.

In *Rise and Fall,* Kennedy ranged widely over many countries and historical periods. In his new book, he casts his net even wider, dealing with the demographic explosion, global warming, biotech agriculture, air and water pollution, robotics, the globalization of finance, the impact of

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multinational corporations on developing countries, and other such topics. It is in many ways a laudable, perhaps heroic enterprise to deal with such broad topics in an age of growing specialization among historians and political scientists. But it is also a high-risk venture. No one can possibly be equally at home in all the disciplines covered by Kennedy; ideally such an undertaking should be written by a committee, in which case it would probably be unreadable.

Furthermore, there is no certainty that its conclusions would be any more reliable. For predictions about demographic and technological development are as risky as those about economic and political trends. Yesteryear's comments on America's relative economic decline make curious reading when the German and Japanese economies are in recession, and United States industrial production alone among the developed countries shows an annual increase of more than four percent. The American unemployment rate is 7.1 percent and falling slightly; those of Germany and Sweden, let alone the other European countries, are higher. Perhaps everyone has entered a phase of relative decline. Kennedy could not have foreseen this, just as he did not foresee in 1988 the impending demise of the Soviet empire. Perhaps the present trends are as misleading as those of the past, but the question arises: if the immediate future is inscrutable, how reliable are the forecasts concerning the more distant one? How certain can one be as to who will be winning and losing in the years to come?

The issues raised by Kennedy are all very real. In fact, there is perhaps an excess of caution in this book, for instance, in describing the woes of American education and health care. But all this has been said many times before. In fact, there is little in this book that attentive readers of the weekly *Economist,* fortified by such statistical handbooks as *World Resources 1990/1, World Population Prospects,* and *Development Report,* will not have read before. Towards the end of his book, Kennedy reaches the unstartling conclusion that "as the Cold War fades away we face not a new world order, but a troubled and fractured planet, whose problems deserve the serious attention of politicians and public alike." Is it hopeless? Not quite; it may still be possible for intelligent men and women to lead their societies through the complex task of preparing for the century ahead. But how could they do this if, according to Kennedy, nothing is certain except that we face innumerable uncertainties? "Interventions could produce their own unforeseen and unintended changes."

Do we know how many developing nations will be able to follow East Asia's growth? No, says Kennedy, it is impossible to tell. Can we be certain that Europe will be better off in the next century? Yes – if it manages to solve its problems. But if it does not resolve the cluster of chal-

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lenges confronting it, "it will suffer the consequences." Kennedy does go as far as saying that conditions in Africa are likely to stay bad and that the prospects of the former Soviet Union are not rosy either: "The Western democracies might be unwise to assume that the collapse of the 'evil empire' is going to be an unqualified advantage to themselves." Whoever made such assumptions? Or elsewhere: "In the light of the broad global trends discussed in the preceding chapters, we should not be surprised if further internal and regional conflicts break out." And "simply because we do not know the future, it is impossible to say with certainty, whether global trends will lead to terrible disaster or be diverted by astonishing advances in human adaptation." If awards were given for popularizing the uncertainty principle in history, this book would rank high among the contenders.

Kennedy can certainly not be accused of sensationalism. His book has been ridiculed by reviewers for the frequent "on one hand – on the other" and "it remains to be seen" approach and, generally speaking, the constant hedging of bets. This is a little unfair, for the only prudent way of writing a book like this is to point to various scenarios. Kennedy was not well served by his publishers, who announced that he would tell us who would be the winners and the losers in the decades to come. He is a very circumspect man: If the present growth rate in China will continue as in recent years, progress will be assured. But then he reminds us that economic gains might be swallowed up by population growth – which means that all bets are off.

In the case of India and China, the author does make a policy recommendation – the only logical solution (to assist China and India in their race against time) is for the developing nations to help them with capital, technology, and brainpower. But this is not a very realistic or helpful suggestion. Even if the issue would figure much higher on the Western and Japanese agenda, the needs greatly exceed the means of the developed countries – especially at a time of recession. Did the author not know this when he made his logical proposal?

Altogether, this book makes the impression that the original idea came from a publisher rather than an author, and that the latter gradually realized that he faced an impossible mission. The public likes to read books in which either the coming apocalypse or a brilliant future for mankind are outlined with utter conviction. If Toynbee or Spengler or their imitators had sounded their trumpets less certainly, who would have listened to them? Kennedy's book is sensible on the whole, but there are too many platitudes, and he does not know any better than the next man the answers to the questions he poses. It may still be of some use in view of stating some cardinal problems and also because of the rich statistical material it provides. But I doubt whether the author will be eager to en-

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gage once again on a venture of this kind.

John Lukacs, also a history professor, cannot be accused of excessive caution. He is a man of aggressive certainties based on a firmly conservative and religious *Weltanschauung*. A native of Budapest (a subject on which he has written a very informative book), he is the author of works covering various aspects of twentieth-century history. In his history of the Cold War, Lukacs made it clear that he did not like communism but that he disliked the anticommunists even more, and most of all (if I understood him correctly) the social democrats, to whom at the time he thought the future belonged: Russia, like America, was moving towards a welfare state. Some fifteen years later, this unfortunate thesis was picked up for a while by some misguided Sovietologists. Now Lukacs seems to put his money on nationalism (or national socialism), even though he does not particularly like it. He may be closer to reality this time, at least in the short run.

Lukacs writes well and is refreshingly free of academic jargon. His references are not to Marcuse or his Hungarian namesake or sundry social scientists, but to Rivarol, Jacob Burckhardt, Tocqueveille, and Belloc-Chesterton. The eccentricities are sometimes engaging; it would be tedious to have a uniform intellectual spectrum in our historical and political literature. There is, furthermore, the occasional insight not found in mainstream academic writing. But too often the idiosyncrasies get out of hand, and there is a tendency to make sweeping statements on the basis of flimsy or nonexistent evidence. Thus, in the present book (to give but one example) he builds a whole new theory on the difference between the meaning of *grazhdanin* (in Russian) and citizen (or *citoyen*). *Grazhdanin* (Lukacs claims) means the inhabitants of a state, not a city (as in the West). In the West, all civic freedoms had come from the city; in Russia they had not. In any case, Russian cities had no walls; there were no borders. But the word *grazhdanin* is etymologically derived from *gorod* or *grad* (which means city), and this word in turn comes from *ograda* (fence). Thus much about the theory; freedom in Russia did not grow in the cities, but neither did it come from the state. Elsewhere he comments on an "excellent conservative journal named *Vekhy*" (which never existed); calls General Vlasov a "Dostoevskyan figure" (which he was no more than, say, Molotov or Gromyko); and sees the roots of Russian duality (between East and West) to this very day in the history of the Russian Church.

At the Brandenburg Gate Lukacs meets officers and soldiers of the Russian army selling dark fur caps, army coats, and all kinds of military medals. In truth, alas, the vendors are gypsies from Romania and Yugoslavia. One would imagine that a native of Budapest would know

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the difference between a Russian soldier and a gypsy, but perhaps Lukacs had been away from these parts for too long. From the Berlin gypsies to Johann Strauss's *Gypsy Baron;* the author presents a perfectly accurate description of the operetta, and then – a mighty jump – he argues that Eastern Europe may become the central theater of world history. Vienna and Budapest (he predicts) are on the way to becoming twin cities, like Buda and Pest, divided by the Danube. Assertions of this kind are stretching imagination and credulity beyond permissible limits.

Lukacs writes with greater authority on France and England than on Russia and Germany. Unfortunately, there is not that much to be said at present about France and Britain in the context of world history. "Something new and probably unexpected will emerge in Western Europe during the next few decades. What this will be I do not know." Even the Delphic Oracle was less cryptic.

Looking further ahead, Lukacs sees the end of the modern age, that is to say, the expansion of Europe, liberalism, humanism, privacy, the age of the book, and so on. He sees many threats to civilization, last but not least by an oppressive democracy, the tyranny of the majority – "the rule of popularity, often dependent on the lowest of common denominators." He is not entirely pessimistic – apace with the passing of the modern age the respect for its culture and civilization among thinking men and women will continue to grow. And he recalls La Rochefoucauld, who has taught us things are never as bad, or as good, as they seem, a maxim of which Lukacs's compatriot Theodor Herzl was very fond. Or as Micawber said, perhaps something will turn up.

What is one to make of this curious book? It is a mixture of *aperçus* on world history and politics and travelogue, at times amusing, at others boring, sometimes original and interesting, at others absurd and insensitive. Sometimes it seems that Evelyn Waugh was the intellectual godfather of this book, an English eccentric (partly phony), funny and exasperating. There is the Waughian rudeness; Lukacs relates how he said in a Budapest restaurant in a loud voice and in the presence of the physicist, that Edward Teller was the Zsa Zsa Gabor of American physics. He must have thought this a witty or profound remark; otherwise he would not have preserved it for posterity. He could be right, but since he is neither movie critic nor nuclear scientist, how would he know? Evelyn Waugh did not write history. For a book entitled *Budapest Revisited,* he might have been the right mentor; for *The End of the Twentieth Century and the End of the Modern Age* he was not.

WALTER LAQUEUR

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Afterlives

TRYING CONCLUSIONS: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, 1961-1991. By Howard Nemerov. University of Chicago Press. $18.95.

SELECTED POEMS. By Derek Mahon. Viking/Gallery. $20.00.

SEEING THINGS. By Seamus Heaney. Farrar Straus & Giroux. $19.00.

You know," Diane Arbus once said, "I'm going to be remembered for being Howard Nemerov's sister." Family genius is as unpredictable as the judgments of posterity. While Arbus's claim seemed richly ironic during the decade or so after her suicide in 1971, when her photographs of freaks and drag queens were everywhere, it seems less so now. But neither her diminished stature nor the recent vogue in favor of traditional verse forms has pushed her brother's work into the spotlight. There are many possible reasons for Nemerov's continuing obscurity: he lived most of his working life in St. Louis; no single poem of his has achieved a secure place in anthologies; he preferred to publish with university presses. When he died in the spring of 1992 after a long and honorable career, soon after a stint as Poet Laureate of the United States, he seemed for a moment to cast a more commanding shadow than he ever had during his lifetime.

Arbus was obsessed with disproportion, especially in human form. Nemerov's art, by contrast, was all balance and poise; he loved Vermeer for "pretending to no heroic stances or gestures." Such Apollonian virtues isolated Nemerov during the swashbuckling sixties, and a defensive testiness crept into his poetry: "The others went right on/ Talking about form, talking about myth/ And the (so help us) need for a modern idiom." He was clearly thinking about his own work too when he wrote, in a late tribute to Philip Larkin: "He was our modern; in his attitude,/ And not in all that crap about free verse." Nearly all the poems included in *Trying Conclusions,* selected from roughly the second two-thirds of Nemerov's career, are in iambic pentameter, more blank verse than rhymed.

Nemerov once charted the career of the typical, self-aggrandizing American poet:

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From epigram to epic is the course
For riders of the American wingéd horse.
They change both size and sex over the years,
The voice grows deeper and the beard appears;
Running for greatness they sweat away their salt,
They start out Emily and wind up Walt.

("Strange Metamorphosis of Poets")

Nemerov himself never threw out the salt of the epigram; if his sister chose the outsized, he preferred the *multo in parvo* powers of the very short poem. His most conspicuous successes come when an intellectual recognition finds something kindred in the sounds of language, when he notices, for example, how "Something that turns upon a hidden hinge/ Brings down the dead leaf and live seed together" ("The End of Summer School"). That Frost-like discovery depends for its wit on the musical chiasmus of "dead leaf and live seed." In another poem Nemerov finds, in the customary – though who before him had noticed how *strange*? – arrangement of mirror and medicine cabinet, a fable for aesthetic interpretation. The mirror of art tells the critic, "I am self-evident." The critic's response: "I unbelieving looked behind the glass/ On razor, styptic, mouthwash and Band-aid;// And it has been my life's ambition since/ To elucidate the mirror by its medicines" ("Critic"). "Elucidate," there, is just right, with its suggestion of bringing light to bear.

Reading these poems, one feels grateful for all of them (there's always *something* in a Nemerov poem worth noting, even in the slacker, longer ones), as well as that special gratitude for ten or fifteen that one promises oneself to remember and return to. Just before he died, Nemerov published in *The New Yorker* a poem that I think is his best, a fitting curtain call for his own career. "The End of the Opera," dedicated to his longtime friend and Washington University colleague Mona Van Duyn, begins:

Knowing that what he witnessed was only art,
He never wept while the show was going on.

But the curtain call could always make him cry.
When the cast came forward hand in hand
Bowing and smiling to the clatter of applause,
Tired, disheveled, sweating through the paint,
Radiant with our happiness and theirs . . .

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Our age is in love with figures of exile; Ovid crops up everywhere in current poetry, and Philoctetes is on the move. In Derek Mahon's poetry, displacement is more radical still; for him, the very idea – or spirit – of place is fast becoming obsolete: "for already/ Places as such are dead/ Or nearly; the loved sea/ Reflects banality" ("Brighton Beach"). Mahon's from Northern Ireland, for whose poets exile seems a sort of birthright (though he's Protestant, living now in New York).

Mahon imagines a time when we have followed our gods into exile, leaving behind what he calls the "afterlife" of things. Just as Ovid in exile turned his attention from the missed life in Rome to the flora and fauna on the Scythian coast, Mahon, in "Ovid in Tomis," puts his faith in what will survive our passage here: "The cry at the heart/ Of the artichoke," as he memorably puts it. Some of Mahon's most appealing poems take life from this afterlife, like "The Mute Phenomena," with its closing lines, "Already in a lost hub-cap is conceived/ The ideal society which will replace our own" (a nice play there on "replace" – what's usually done with lost hub-caps).

The most ambitious poem of Mahon's on this theme is "A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford." Mushrooms, a thousand of them crowding to the sunlit keyhole, have inhabited the shed.

> So many days behind the rhododendrons
> With the world waltzing in its bowl of cloud
> They have learnt patience and silence
> Listening to the rooks querulous in the highwood.

I wish Mahon didn't insist on seeing in the mushrooms a symbol of all the "lost people of Treblinka and Pompeii." But he puts us back in that eerie shed when the mushroom voices address the intruding tourist: "You with your light meter and relaxed itinerary,/ Let not our naive labours have been in vain!" "Light meter" is a nice pun for Mahon's own deft music, and, come to think of it, isn't there something both mushroomy and camera-like, as well as nightmarish, in the sound of the name "Treblinka"?

Mahon, like Nemerov, is at his best in poems of sonnet length or less. His is a terse, ironic voice, salty with epigrammatic wit. To a fisherman of sole: "Somewhere a god waits,/ rod in hand,/ to add you to their number." Some of his most memorable poems fall into two brief parts, the mind shifting quickly from one perception to another. Thus, "Rock Music," with its segue from a sleepless night of heavy metal blasting from below to a morning on the strand with a different kind of rock music, "Whisper of algae, click of stone on stone,/ A thousand limpets left by

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the ebb-tide/ Unanimous in their silent inquisition." "Tractatus" appends a corollary to Wittgenstein's dictum, "The world is everything that is the case." The case *imaginatively,* too, Mahon adds:

> Tacitus believed mariners could *hear*
> The sun sinking into the western sea:
> And who would question that titanic roar,
> The steam rising wherever the edge may be?

Lovely those sonic leaps from "Tractatus" to "Tacitus" (with the play between what is "tacit" and what is heard) to "titanic."

Towards the end of Seamus Heaney's graceful and unmannered version of Sophocles's *Philoctetes,* entitled *The Cure at Troy* (1991), the self-pitying hero is admonished, "Stop just licking your wounds. Start seeing things." Philoctetes, abandoned on his island, claims he's "been in the afterlife/ For ten years now." A false and self-deluding afterlife, Heaney suggests. His new and opulent volume *Seeing Things* opens with versions of the afterlife: a gorgeous translation of the lines from the *Aeneid* about the golden bough, and a Dantesque encounter with Philip Larkin (as important a shade for Heaney as for Nemerov) on his final journey, which turns out to be the "journey back/ Into the heartland of the ordinary." The poems that follow marshal the afterlife of ordinary things – keepsakes and talismans – as they take up residence within us. Heaney addresses this Rilkean subject with his own characteristic grit and tensile awareness. A ploughed field, a soccer game with "four jackets for four goalposts," the garden lines pegged out with tight white string – "All these things entered you/ As if they were both the door and what came through it."

The things of this book are mainly associated with Heaney's father, just as the folded sheets of his previous collection, *The Haw Lantern,* were maternal presences. Heaney is preternaturally aware of his parents' afterlife in him, how every man carries, like Aeneas, his own spent father out of the fray. There's strength in this recognition, as a haiku for the New Year makes clear: "Dangerous pavements./ But I face the ice this year/ With my father's stick" ("I.I.87").

Seeing Things includes a fine sequence of seven sonnets called "Glanmore Revisited," harking back to the "opened ground" sonnets in *Field Work.* The sonnet, that most closed of English verse forms, has always been for Heaney a site for openings, revelations. My favorite is the seventh, "The Skylight," which begins: "You were the one for skylights. I opposed/ Cutting into the seasoned tongue-and-groove/ Of pitch pine.

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I liked it low and closed,/ Its claustrophobic, nest-up-in-the-roof/ Effect. I liked the snuff-dry feeling./ The perfect, trunk-lid fit of the old ceiling." Those hyphenated adjectives create their own tight fit, the snug room of the sonnet. Then light's let in:

> But when the slates came off, extravagant
> Sky entered and held surprise wide open.
> For days I felt like an inhabitant
> Of that house where the man sick of the palsy
> Was lowered through the roof, had his sins forgiven,
> Was healed, took up his bed and walked away.

A bit past fifty, in the middle of his own road, Heaney seems to be writing with a newfound confidence and élan. My guess is he's been told a thousand times that he's too private a poet, that he's needed in the Irish cause, that sonnets make nothing happen. "Stop licking your wounds," he seems to be answering. "Start seeing things."

CHRISTOPHER BENFEY

History's Pain, Poetry's Pleasure

REBELLION IS THE CIRCLE OF A LOVER'S HANDS. By Martin Espada. Curbstone Press. $9.95.

AFTER WE LOST OUR WAY. By David Mura. E. P. Dutton. $7.95.

BETWEEN SILENCES. By Ha Jin. University of Chicago Press. $20.00.

It would be glib and misleading to treat these three books as equivalent instances of what is sometimes called "ethnic" poetry. Each of these books grows out of and establishes a slightly different relation between America and the poet's own cultural background. Martin Espada's *Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lover's Hands* is perhaps the most insistent of the three on the tension between cultures, as its bilingual format may suggest. David Mura's *After We Lost Our Way* offers a more "assimilated" voice, if one that dwells bitterly at times on past wrongs. Ha Jin's *Between Silences* is

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the most difficult to classify as "ethnic": written in English, its author is a native of China and veteran of the Cultural Revolution, now studying in this country.

As Amiri Baraka's name on the foreword suggests, Espada's book is the most pervasively militant of the three, the most continually informed by anger at social and economic injustices. This anger gives the book considerable moral urgency but also prevents Espada from exploring other tones and registers. His rhetoric is declamatory, his prosody raw-edged, and so his poems move slashingly rather than subtly. Yet Espada doesn't simply write the same generic protest poem over and over. Some of his poems are moving character studies, like "Portrait of a Real Hijo de Puta":

> Not the obscenity
> but a real ten year old
> son of a whore,
> locked out of the apartment
> so mama could return
> to the slavery
> of her ancestors
> who knew the master's burglary
> of their bodies at night,
> mama who sleeps
> in a pool of clear rum;
>
> and the real hijo de puta poses
> with the swim team photograph
> at the community center,
> bragging fists in the air,
> grinning like a cheerleader
> with hidden cigarette burns,
> a circus strongman
> who steals cheese and crackers
> from the office
> where the door is deliberately
> left open.

In a few light strokes this poem sketches the living blend of bravado and pain that dwells behind a casual Spanish epithet. Metaphor is minimal yet plays a crucial role in projecting the gap between the boy's swagger, as padded and theatrical as "a circus strongman," and his dependence on anonymous acts of charity disguised as carelessness so as not to insult him. A poem like this succeeds not as a result of subtle craftsmanship, but be-

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cause a recognizable and complex human image has been evoked from a minimum of information.

Perhaps Espada's most memorable poems are the ones that render the vitality of Latino culture with a kind of sardonic brio, as in "Latin Night at the Pawnshop," with its playful reminiscence of Pound's "In a Station of the Metro":

> The apparition of a salsa band
> gleaming in the Liberty Loan
> pawnshop window:
>
> Golden trumpet,
> silver trombone,
> congas, maracas, tambourine,
> all with price tags dangling
> like the city morgue ticket
> on a dead man's toe.

The poem executes a wonderful pseudo-Imagist double take as the instruments become by turns metonymies for life and for death, the salsa band in all its raucous vigor and the silent corpses that poverty and need has turned them into. Another very funny poem, "The Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry Stomp," transforms the speaker's furtive attempt to conceal and take possession of a stray dollar bill while tying his shoes into a salsa-tinged dance performed in honor of the patron saint of canned food. In both these poems Espada offers a wry yet biting analysis of the tangled relations between ethnic culture and that ever-in-demand commodity, money.

Not all Espada's poems are funny, however. The book opens with an ambitious suite of poems centered on Puerto Rico's struggle with colonial rule, a struggle figured as a volatile interaction of history and hands. The book's title poem tells of a fifty-year-old massacre whose impact is registered in the way "the news/ halted the circular motion" of one woman's hands "as she embroidered the wedding dress" for her marriage to one of the dead men. That motion is resumed metaphorically as the poem ends, conflated now with the motion of struggle itself: "But rebellion/ is the circle of a lover's hands,/ that must keep moving,/ always weaving." If Espada's poems occasionally become heavy-handed in their use of metaphor, that is a risk he is clearly willing to take, conscious as he is of all the burdens hands must assume if they wish to engage with history.

David Mura's *After We Lost Our Way* is much more eclectic in its concerns. What Mura shares with Espada is a sense of history as tragic

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burden, not to be evaded through appeals to imagination, beauty, or other transcendent motifs. For Mura, a third-generation Japanese-American, history in the first instance is the narrative of his parents and grandparents, which dominates the first section of the book: their efforts to assimilate themselves to a new culture while maintaining their own; above all their long sojourn in the "relocation camps" during World War II. But history takes many other forms here as well: the life and death of Pier Paolo Pasolini, tales of violence and betrayal in Hiroshima, Vietnam, Soweto, the Phillipines, minor tragedies in the emergency room where Mura's wife worked as an intern.

Atrocity is the keynote in all these histories, suffering on a scale that challenges the imagination and perhaps threatens to disable it. Such extremity may be better met by the theoretical intellect, and one of the traits that distinguishes Mura from Espada is his greater propensity for abstract thinking, as his epigraphs from Benjamin and Adorno suggest. Here the danger is that particular lives may become mere supporting evidence for a cataclysmic theory of history. Throughout the book Mura relies on a perhaps overly neat dialectic between pain and pleasure, history and hope, or as the title of one poem puts it, "This Loss, This Brightness." Thus at moments one feels that some avatar of Beauty has been dutifully trotted out merely to provide a bit of relief from the relentless catalogue of horrors, as when a woman writing on the Holocaust turns to nature for solace:

> "I knew that I couldn't write it with just Himmler, the camps,
> the corpses, there had to be more, these moments of release" –
> a clarity of tears, sunlight; the aimless, unfolding
> hills, a sapling, petunias, bending in the breeze.

Yet if the book is occasionally weakened by its tendency to schematize and seek insufficiently realized alternatives to suffering, its power derives equally from Mura's unflinching attention to the psychology of pain, many varieties of which are anatomized. Some of these poems are all but unbearable in their graphic depiction of bodily torment – such as a nightmare Vietnam poem, "Lan Nguyen: The Uniform of Death," and one about a South African township informant made to wear a burning tire "necklace." Other poems explore more inward conditions: a man's addiction to pornography and the loathing it engenders, the quiet desperation of poisoned Hiroshima survivors and Japanese internees, Pasolini's self-destructive political and sexual adventuring. In all these cases it is the precise circumstance that interests Mura, the uniqueness of each plight as it gathers nuance and detail; yet the sheer range of historical

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instances in the book seems to open a more abstract, even allegorical space in which the archetypes of suffering remain constant.

To speak of mere craft in this context may seem callous, but that tension is intrinsic to the dilemma of Mura's poetry. If he has a recurring fault, it is a tendency to prolixity, reflected most clearly in his use of piled-up adjectives and apposed phrases. Where Espada's syntax is wiry and spare, Mura's is accretive, restless, yet he doesn't always have the verbal imagination to justify his bloated sentences. "Grandfather-in-Law" displays this vice at its worst, perhaps because it's written in long C. K. Williams-like lines that seem to elicit a kind of verbal vamping, as in phrases like "some pressing, raw unpeeled persistence, some libidinous desire for dominance." But another expansive poem, the wonderful "Song for Uncle Tom, Tonto and Mr. Moto," takes its cue from Ginsberg, using rhetorical proliferation to evoke a comic yet menacing rage on behalf of all obsequious Others:

> . . . we are all good niggers, good gooks and japs, good spics and
> rice eaters
> saying memsab, sahib, bwana, boss-san, senor, rather, heartthrob
> oh
> honored and most unceasing, oh devisor and provider of our
> own
> obsequious, ubiquitous ugliness, which stares at you baboon-like,
> banana-like
> dwarf-like, tortoise-like, dirt-like, slant-eyed, kink-haired, ashen
> and pansied
> and brutally unredeemable, we are whirling about you, tartars of
> the air
> all the urinating, tarantula grasping, ant multiplying, succubused,
> hothouse hordes
> yes, it us, it us, we knockee, yes, sir, massa, boss-san, we tearee
> down your door!

What gives this poem its special ferocity is the way it synthesizes the historical victims of racism into a single Frankenstein-like figure.

Poems like these raise perennial and perhaps insoluble questions about the relations between art and historical atrocities – for example, whether poetry can approach such matters at all without subtly aestheticizing and so falsifying them. Mura is, I think, entirely aware of these issues and addresses them more than once, as in the coda to his brilliant fantasia on Pasolini:

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> Here is the rose of history. Pull the petals apart.
> A faint murmuring starts, then shouting, shrieking,
> an interminable roar. So you close the rose, call it
> simple, a rose without history, innocent, eternal.

This implicit critique of Yeats, and of poetic tradition more generally, expresses Mura's resolve to open the poem to history's particulars at the cost of those values that have sanctified art for so long: beauty, innocence, universality. Such an effort may be doomed to contradiction, compromise, incompletion – art can never escape its aesthetic function, and Mura's ear for the music of language shows clearly enough that he doesn't want it to. His commitment to the infinitely problematic task of conveying real human pain and its historical causes in a medium dedicated to pleasure is characteristic of our moment in American poetry, but Mura's immersion in history makes him better suited to the task than poets who merely pay lip service to what others have endured.

Universals would seem to be the last thing on Ha Jin's mind in his volume *Between Silences,* a frighteningly exact account of the Cultural Revolution in China from a young soldier's point of view. Unlike Mura's poems, Jin's are simple in diction and syntax; unlike Espada's, they are quiet, unemphatic. Most of them tell stories about what people became under the Maoist regime, and while the facts are powerful in themselves, what makes these poems affecting is their delicate play of tone. The line between victim and oppressor is much blurrier here than in Espada and Mura; instead pathos emerges from the way in which individuals allowed themselves to be, in Jin's phrase, "fooled" by history. The book's first poem is spoken posthumously by a soldier who drowned trying to rescue a plaster statue of Chairman Mao and was honored as a hero. At the end of the poem he addresses a visitor to his grave who no longer swears to emulate him but instead weeps: "Damn you, why don't you open your mouth?/ Something must have happened./ What? Why don't you tell me?" The poem is carefully dated "1986," presumably to make clear that the "something" referred to is not the massacre at Tienanmen Square; indeed it is not any singular event, but rather the gradual recognition that the speaker's heroism, like so much of the period's turmoil, was founded on delusion and mass hypnosis. With its muted irony, it sets the tone for the book, which explores many variations on this historically split consciousness.

More relentlessly focused on a single history than Mura or even Espada, Jin creates a remarkably complex picture of the ambivalences and hypocrisies that flourish in an intensely nationalistic culture. While some poems concern themselves with the suffering of those punished by the

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state, most adopt the voice of the half-heartedly patriotic citizen caught up in the dehumanizing machinery of the Cultural Revolution. That voice is given surprising range, yet finally it cannot rise above historical irony. To complain of this limitation is to complain of the history that forced it on Ha Jin. Clearly he knows that his poetry is being constrained by its subject; yet he also knows that to speak at all is a privilege to be used wisely. A poem forebodingly entitled "Because I Will Be Silenced" ends with a poignant question: "How can I speak about coffee and flowers?" Still tied to his own country emotionally and politically, Jin cannot afford to waste the opportunity his stay in American affords. To write about coffee and flowers, pleasure and beauty, might better please the authorities in Beijing but would not fulfill his avowed purpose, to speak for those who cannot, like the person addressed in "A Photograph from China":

> At our last dinner you told me
> you had delayed so long to go back
> because you could not shut your mouth.
>
> The photograph you sent me
> shows how happy you are back
> with your wife and kids.
> Behind you the winding paths
> look the same on the Small-Monk Mountain.
> It is so tranquil.
>
> Still, I am worried
> about your smiling mouth.

Of the three poets, Jin is most fully immersed in the history of which he writes, hence he is most willing to make his art subservient to the demands of that history. But in their clarity, restraint, mingled empathy and ironic distance, his poems find ways to be true to the demands of art as well. The negotiation is a complex, *ad hoc* one for each of these poets, all of whom try to reconcile the aesthetic dimensions of lyric poetry with the ethical stances history forces on them. Espada's fierce gesturing, Mura's obsessive descriptions, Jin's calm, steady speech represent alternative answers to a question poetry asks itself over and over, the question of human pain and how it can be addressed in an art so intimately linked with pleasure.

ROGER GILBERT

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LETTERS

To the Editor:

What is *Partisan Review*'s criterion for political correctness? In his comment, "Histories of the Left" (Summer 1993), Editor William Phillips condemns my book, *The Rise and Fall of the American Left,* along with two other books. Why? "They all advocate," he writes in reference to the thirties, "the extension of the earlier radicalism." The mouth drops. Actually my book advocated a return to the much earlier liberal skepticism of the authors of the *Federalist,* in which today's academic poststructuralists may find a more illuminating analysis of power than in anything coming from the dense verbiage of contemporary French "theory." But Phillips and *PR* in its long career have shown scant interest in American political thought. The American En-lightenment, not to mention New England Calvinism and its heirs, never touched the New York intellectuals, and until Alfred Kazin and Lionel Trilling made their appearances, few *PR* contributors or readers showed much interest in older American literature. As to the thirties, that decade strikes me as important not because its rediscovery offers the possibility, as Phillips charges, of establishing a continuity of radical traditions and thus repeating the mistakes of the past. On the contrary, the decade remains important because it put America so much further ahead of any other European country in political thought and cultural reflection.

PR, of all publications, should take pride in this heritage. Instead, for whatever the reasons, Phillips seeks to disown it by dismissing it, and in the process he distorts it with his impatience with the era's rich intellectual debates, which he denounces as "abstract," "hair-splitting," and "provincial." I shall not go into these debates, one of which, "American Exceptionalism," is more relevant than ever now with the end of the Cold War and the question of whether America's historical traditions, political institutions, and values can serve as a guide to countries that have experienced entirely different historical conditions. But I must correct the record on one specific subject.

Phillips maligns the memory of Max Eastman by describing him as a "rather superficial literary critic." A keen observer of literary-philosophical trends as well as political developments, Eastman, far from being superficial, was prescient and at times even profound in being the first intellectual to perceive Marxism as simply a rhetorical construction tied together by a specious logic in a kind of ontological mesmerization. Precisely because Eastman was sensitive to the tricks and tropes of language he was not taken in by Marxism. No less than Edmund Wilson praised Eastman's *The Literary Mind* (1932) as "distinguished by a deeper comprehension of the real issues raised by

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contemporary literature than almost anything written in the twenties."

In his role as historian-memoirist as well as editor, Phillips insults the past by getting it wrong. Thus he tells us that Eastman "was exposed by Sidney Hook in a series of polemics about the dialectic and other fundamentals of Marxism, as not being a very complex thinker." Surely anyone who followed the debate between Hook and Eastman, which lasted for a decade (1928-38), would realize that it was Eastman who "exposed" the fallacies in Hook's pragmatic defense of Marxism – which indeed Hook all but conceded when, in *Reason, Social Myths, and Democracy* (1940), he then admitted that Marxism was too full of Hegelian faiths and fluidities to warrant being an empirical science.

PR readers will be seriously misled if they accept Phillips's account of the thirties. My book happened to be dedicated to both Hook and Eastman. But one would never know from Phillips's memory who was the wiser and braver thinker. Eastman's *Artists in Uniform* appeared the same year as Hook's *Toward an Understanding of Karl Marx* (1933). While Eastman courageously exposed the suppression of cultural freedom under Stalin, Hook defended the entire catastrophe of totalitarianism: party dictatorship, revolutionary violence, elimination of opposition factions, and the delegitimation of liberal democracy ("Wherever we find a state, there we find a dictatorship"). By 1935 Hook had changed his mind, as did many who began to associate with *PR* in the mid-thirties. But *PR* has no unique claim to a prophetic anticommunism, particularly since it is a publication that remained under the spell of Trotskyism long after Eastman had seen through its desperate illusions. "I've often wondered," Phillips speculates, "why so many remained in the fold, after I and my colleague Philip Rahv broke with the Communists. It was not easy, as we were vilified and shunned."

No one was more vilified and shunned than Max Eastman, who made his break more than a decade before Phillips and Rahv, and who suffered the consequences. Lonely are the brave.

John Patrick Diggins
New York, New York

William Phillips replies:

Diggins's comment illustrates precisely the inflation of the intellectual contributions of figures within the radical tradition of the thirties to which I objected. Eastman and Calverton deserve credit for being early critics of orthodox Marxism and Stalinism. But they were not first-rate thinkers. I was not the only one who thought at the time that Eastman's *Enjoyment of Poetry* was superficial. Most sophisticated writers and critics found it to be old-fashioned, even that early. As for Sidney Hook, he

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was clearly a much superior thinker to Max Eastman.

In any event, as I suggested, what is called for today is not a pious extension of the radical heritage, but rather some fresh and independent thought. I think it also must be said that the attempt to extend the radical heritage into the present has led to the trendy ideologies of political correctness.

The literary and intellectual achievements came after 1937 from the anti-Stalinist community around *Partisan Review* – from such figures as Sidney Hook, Meyer Schapiro, Diana and Lionel Trilling, Clement Greenberg, Philip Rahv, Elizabeth Hardwick, Dwight Macdonald, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Norman Podhoretz, Lionel Abel, Steven Marcus, to name just a few.

Diggins's jibe at our ignoring American subjects brings back memories of criticism from the right that we were outsiders. And his remark about our Trotskyism, in addition to being inaccurate, repeats the old criticism from the Stalinists and later from the left historians.

Incidentally, I did not put down Diggins's book as a whole: it contains much useful information and speculation.

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